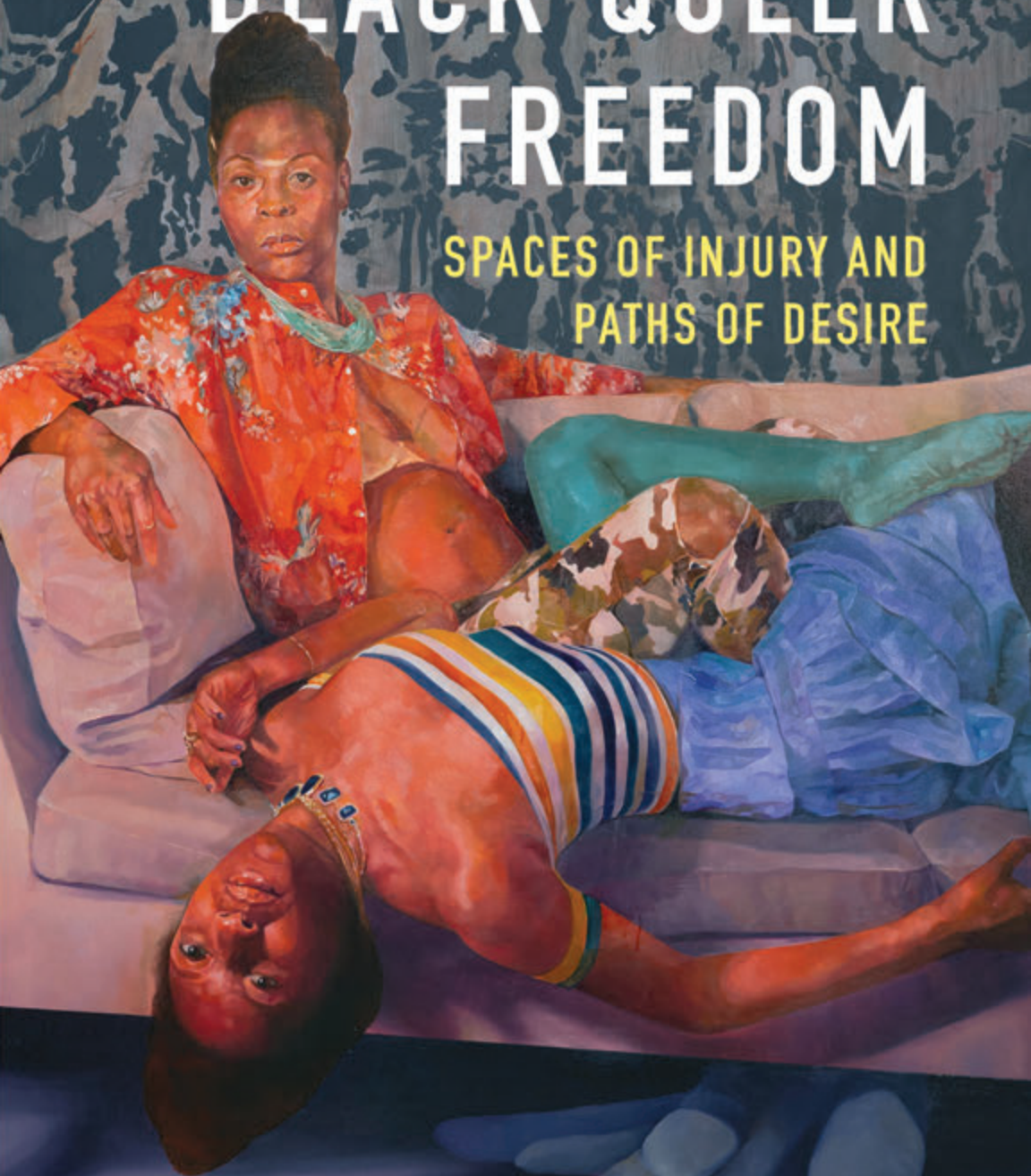


BLACK QUEER FREEDOM

SPACES OF INJURY AND
PATHS OF DESIRE



GERSHUN AVILEZ

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BLACK QUEER FREEDOM

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PATHS OF DESIRE

GerShun Avilez



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*Dedicated to
Thadious, my inspiration,
and
Corey, my foundation*

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BLACK QUEER FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION

Freedom in Restriction

I had never been one to flirt. As a gay boy in the hood, I learned early that throwing game at another boy could get you a beatdown.

—Big Freedia, *God Save the Queen Diva!*

The musical artist Big Freedia's reluctance to express same-sex desire in her autobiography conveys what is often at stake for queer intimacy and unconventional gender expression: a beatdown. Physical violence, intimidation, and manipulation tread softly but incessantly behind the queer body and desire. Following in the footsteps of artists such as Sylvester and RuPaul, Big Freedia has become a popular music icon as well as a prominent symbol of Black queer expression in the twenty-first century. Big Freedia (Freddie Ross) is a singer and performer who has helped bring bounce music, a style of rap music that originated in New Orleans, to national attention. Bounce is known for its signature drumbeat, call-and-response structure, association with the club scene, sexually suggestive dance moves (such as, twerking), and more recently gender-bending performers.¹ Freedia, a gay man who uses female pronouns, has made it her platform to encourage the embrace of bounce music throughout the country. Her autobiography, *God Save the Queen Diva!*, serves as a history and handbook on bounce, a form she connects to African diasporic performance traditions.² In exploring the New Orleans culture and community that gave birth to this expression of hip-hop, Freedia also provides insight on the challenges to queer intimacy and Black queer identity.

Although she often feels empowered by her music and energetic performances, her personal interactions in public and private demonstrate her undeniable vulnerability. In one of several troubling incidents that she relates in her book, Freedia describes being attacked while walking through

her family's living room; her stepfather, who always objected to Freedia's feminine-gender expression, attacks and begins to beat the performer in front of her mother with no provocation (53). She also relates another moment of unexpected injury while she is in her car. She decides to drive a friend home after a performance at a club. An unknown man, who had seen Freedia perform that evening and followed her out of the club, shoots the singer in the arm (128). Freedia was not fatally injured, but that bullet is still lodged in her arm. Freedia documents threats to her person whether walking through her home or being out on the street, and for the most part, these threats have to do with her public expression of her queerness. This expression most often reflects her embrace of gender indeterminacy, which manifests in her use of feminine pronouns to refer to herself though she is male identified, a practice I employ in writing about her. It is her indeterminacy alongside her same-sex desire that sometimes endangers her. Her insistence that "throwing game at another boy could get you a beatdown" best distills the dangers of queerness and queer desire (99). The subtlest hint of same-sex desire (a desirous glance, a mischievous smile, a wink, etc.) might lead to bodily injury or worse because of homophobic anxiety. Queer desire endangers those who express it. In reading the autobiography, one that celebrates regional Black cultural expression and claims a certain level of agency for Freedia through the performative enactment of queerness and bodily pleasure that bounce instantiates, the reader never loses sight of the precarious social positioning of the Black queer body.

Black Queer Freedom: Spaces of Injury and Paths of Desire begins with a consideration of Big Freedia's account of her life because her experiences can help us think through the boundaries of queer freedom and, specifically, the social threats that are directed toward the Black queer body. Simply moving through space—that is, walking down the street, going to work, traveling across state or national borders, or interacting with institutions—proves to be especially risky business for racial and sexual minorities. This book explains how attending to and challenging such threats constitutes the defining element in the work of Black queer cultural producers. *Black Queer Freedom* presents the argument that queerness, meaning same-sex desire and gender nonconformity, does introduce the threat of injury, but artists throughout the Black diaspora use queer desire to negotiate spaces of injury.³ I show how Black queer bodies are perceived as social threats, and this perception, in turn, results in threats (physical, psychological, socioeconomic) against these bodies. The Black queer body is immersed in a veritable threat feedback loop. With the spatial metaphor of the feedback loop, I describe the circular thinking that makes minority groups be perceived as perpetual threats. This

loop characterizes a situation in which a majority group feels threatened by the presence of a minority group, and this feeling encourages material and symbolic violence against the perceived threat of the minority group, which ironically strengthens (through discriminatory logic) the social perception of the minority population as menacing and troublemaking. This threat loop—that minority bodies are assumed to be threatening whether or not they pose an actual threat—constitutes the space of injury and creates the conditions for Black queer vulnerability. This space of injury for the Black queer body is not necessarily about a particular architecture or location; it is more about the perception and engagement of that body. The space of injury is potentially any space that a queer body occupies or moves through. The point here is not to avoid precision in specifying the space of injury but, instead, to make clear how for many artists and thinkers, it is vital to recognize the possibility of injury in all locations and resist the desired belief that certain places may be assumed to be safe (such as, home, family, or places that claim to be queer friendly). The space of injury actually describes the Black queer body as it exists and moves through space. I do not seek to cast this body as having injury inhere to it; rather, I make the point that because of social norms and dominant ideologies, this body may always be on the verge of injury.

Given this idea, I contend that Black queer individuals are *injury-bound subjects*. I develop this idea through Abdul JanMohamed's conception of the *death-bound-subject* and theories of Black social death.⁴ JanMohamed defines this subject as one that is formed "by the imminent and ubiquitous threat of death" (2). It is a subject bound to and constantly directed toward death. His discussion is useful because it provides a framework for recognizing the social construction of vulnerability for the Black (male) subject in a hostile racial climate. I shift focus from death to injury because the threat of death does not fully capture the multiple kinds of threat (microaggressions, intimidation, humiliation, displacements, detention, defamation, medical abuses, and misgenderings) that racial and sexual minorities experience. One could argue that every physical threat implies the threat of death, but I think the overemphasis on death obscures the nuance and complexity of the multiple kinds of vulnerability minorities face. Freedia's concern about getting a beatdown is first a fear of injury—physical, emotional, and social. An emphasis on different manifestations of injury illuminates how a broader array of interactions can create conditions of vulnerability, and this more capacious sense of social threat provides the opportunity to consider how gender and class dynamics inflect the threats posed by racism and homophobia.⁵ This book reflects my careful analysis about how threats of queer injury work assiduously along lines of sex and gender expressions. Throughout

this book, the reader will find an explicit focus on the experiences of queer women and queer men with nonconventional gender expression. I work from the understanding that gender expression and identity are imbricated with same-sex desire and can deeply impact if and how one experiences social threat. This recurring attention to the role of gender in the experience of injury indicates the intersectional approach of the methodology as well as a recognition on the level of the argument that all queer bodies may face injury, but all of those bodies do not experience injury in the same manner or to the same extent. Injury, like queerness, is not one-dimensional.⁶

In a move toward thinking about injury and with a focus on queer bodies that might be injured but not killed, this volume builds on Darius Bost's bold intervention into Afro-pessimism and the emergent discourses on Black social death.⁷ Bost insists, "In the context of slavery's afterlife, asserting the *presence* of black gay bodies signals how contemporary theories of antiblackness replicate the historical processes of secondary marginalization experienced by blackness's others" (15; emphasis added). What this critic points to is that which gets lost in the overemphasis on death and absence, especially when we talk about queer bodies, which are often already marginalized if not absent from the narratives and records of the past. My framework of injury emphasizes embodied presence rather than physical or epistemic absence. I take seriously material and epistemic violence but am mindful not to lose sight of the specific realities of queer embodiment within those paradigms.

In bringing injury to the fore, this book also prioritizes desire as a means for contesting or simply dealing with social threat. In the context of a pervasive environment of death, the question of desire becomes secondary in JanMohamed's analysis. He explains,

The imminent, unpredictable possibility of death makes [this subject] live in such a way that his being is consumed with the preoccupation of avoiding the possibility of death. On the other hand, the same structure requires him to control his desire to live as fully as he would like since stepping out of the bounds of his social-death could easily result in his death. He is thus obliged to control and repress his own desire for a full life. *The death-bound-subject's "life" is thus defined by the need to avoid the possibilities of life as well as the possibility of death.* (19; original emphasis)

JanMohamed does a skillful job in tracing out the systematic constraints that render the death-bound-subject a liminal figure who often must restrain or control desire with the goal of self-protection. However, the move to limit or restrain desire is not a prominent concern for Black queer artists and thinkers. Even as they trace out the exact kinds of restraints that JanMohamed

describes, the artists considered in this book consistently and defiantly express desire and claim a freedom within restriction. I track an embracing of life and a declaration of desire, both of which are done within the context of injury. The recognition of the ubiquitous nature of many kinds of threats makes the insistence on life and desire more important and their articulations more compelling.

The injury-bound subject is a subject who *desires*, a subject defined not solely by injury but by desire (i.e., affection, unrestrained pleasure, freedom of movement, self-definition, and unencumbered embodiment), and it is the threat of injury that often informs the investment in disruptive desire. These desires become the subject of artwork by Black diasporic artists, and I evaluate the means for expressing such desire and explain the artists' detailing of the social and psychological contexts of threat. Throughout, this book demonstrates how desire is understood to be a space of freedom as well as a strategy that redefines space. This desirous freedom is not a panacea that solves all problems, nor is it necessarily long-lasting; nevertheless, it offers moments of satisfaction, control, and autonomy. Sometimes, a simple kiss can make one feel freed for a moment.

My emphasis on desire in the context of injury builds on recent work from Black queer theorists around questions of the erotic and pleasure. In his exploration of the social significance of unprotected, or "raw," sex to Black gay men, Marlon M. Bailey advances the concept of erotic (sexual) autonomy in exploring how gay men choose sexual practices in the context of structural drivers. He insists that there is a need to develop a method that "accounts for sexual desires and practices—the contradictions between them—and the social factors and conditions" that shape the paths of and contour those desires and practices.⁸ As much as his essay is about the value of taking pleasure seriously in studies of Black gay male sexual practices and HIV/AIDS, it also reinforces the point that desire is always expressed in a sociocultural setting, a setting that may be anti-Black and determined by social and economic disparities. For Bailey, raw sex becomes one means for a resistant expression of individual desire and a technique of critiquing prominent discourses about queer vulnerability. In a different context but a similar conceptual register, Amber Jamilla Musser argues, in her extended consideration of sexual objectification of minoritarian women's bodies, for the importance of stressing embodied pleasure.⁹ Musser's book centers around what she calls "brown jouissance," a concept that emphasizes sensual embodiment ("fleshiness") that brings together pleasure and pain, subjectivity and objectivity (3). She refuses an understanding of pleasure that might be understood as moving beyond the body ("jouissance" in the psychoanalytic sense). Musser rejects

a binary understanding of racialized female embodiment as either being perpetually objectified or simply liberated in a way that might ignore the kinds of structural realities that Bailey describes. In my reading, brown jouissance is a framework for analysis more than a simple description of a kind of pleasure. Brown jouissance is not just about asserting a pleasure-centered subjectivity. The analytic highlights the social conditions that work around and often against the subject; it reflects a “move toward the space around the individual” as it accentuates expression of the sensual for the individual (42). For both Bailey and Musser, defiant assertions of erotic pleasure push against axes of discrimination. What I take from this body of work is that pleasure may be a tool for undermining acts of interpellation but only when queer pleasure is made visible *within* its restrictive contexts can we fully discern and evaluate the queer subject. Pleasure must be a primary analytic, but pleasure considered in a vacuum tells us very little. It is for this reason that I emphasize threat and forces that seek to limit expressions of queerness in my consideration of desire. The critical move to attend to the “space around” is a way to shed light on the dynamics and complexities of the threat feedback loop. In drawing attention to the “space around,” I consistently detail how this space—consisting of social elements, including laws, public opinion, built environments, family, and employers—determines the social legibility of queer bodies and influences individuals’ relationships to their bodies. The space around bodies informs our understanding of the bodies themselves. I am interested in *bodies in space*.

This emphasis on queer bodies in space means that I am in conversation with cultural theorists who develop ideas about queer space, specifically, Jean-Ulrick Désert and Judith (now Jack) Halberstam. Désert uses the framework of queer space to describe gay and lesbian communities and neighborhoods that transgress the heterocentric norm and dominant narratives about identity and place.¹⁰ His thinking is primarily architectural and sociological, and he prioritizes the meanings of built environments; however, his work has important implications for developing conceptual notions of queer space. Halberstam is one of the most well-known contemporary theorists of queer space as a theoretical site of transgression of normativity. Building on the work offered by social geographers, Halberstam thinks of queer space in two dominant ways: placemaking practices and the production of counterpublics.¹¹ I find the concepts each offers to be highly instructive, but this project is not about queer space, as such. While this book does attend to conceptions of queer space, I am often pointing out how racial ideologies limit the progressive potential of such space—as the discussion in chapter 4 elucidates. I am more interested in how Black queer bodies move through space—spaces that

they might make proprietary and empowering at times but that other times may be quite threatening or objectifying. The point here is that assertions of queer space tend toward the celebratory. My earlier work explored the potential of celebratory eroticism in queer space.¹² Such assessments are vitally important, but in *Black Queer Freedom*, I unearth another way of thinking about the experience of space that does not solely emphasize principles of unfettered liberation. The goal is not to dismiss the possibility of spatial transgression but, instead, to draw attention to the interpenetration of mobility and constraint that follows Black queers through space and that shapes their experience of space. I intervene in existing critical conversations by exploring how racialization disrupts and amplifies theories of queer space by combining concerns about the production of spatial meaning with the social dilemmas surrounding Black embodiment. By engaging theorists of queer space and emphasizing how minority racialization contours one's experience of movement through space as well as when and how one can effect queer space, I offer an important contribution to the field of spatial studies by pointing to the possibility of a specifically Black queer spatial analytical strategy.

Although insisting that critical explorations of the erotic and pleasure provide the foundation for discussion, I purposefully use the concept of desire as the primary means for analysis. What, then, do I mean by desire? When talking about desire, I am most often trying to describe and make legible different means of conveying same-sex sexual attraction and behaviors. This terrain connects readily to considerations of pleasure and the erotic. However, I do not want the reader to neglect my attention to the space and destructive forces that *surround* the desiring body. Being injury-bound can create a longing to move away from injury. In addition to thinking through expressions of sexual yearning, I also track how desire manifests as a longing for a space free of constraint, a space (both material and psychic) in which one can express nonnormative identity. The pages that follow attend to both meanings of desire (effecting erotic connections and longing for social space) and their points of intersection.

My extended concentration on the space around the individual signals that the injury-bound subject is a spatial concept. This subject position is not one who is tethered to injury or categorically defined by it (bound as in linked), nor is this figure driven or propelled toward it (as in directionally bound). By *bound*, I mean surrounded by. I call attention to how Black queer individuals are often surrounded by the threat of injury—what Musser describes as the “space around.” I am less interested in tying injury directly to the Black body and more interested in pointing to the perception and treatment of that body as dangerous and threatening. To be bound is to be located and locatable in

space, and questions of space loom large throughout *Black Queer Freedom*. Black, queer, and Black queer subjects often lack freedom of movement, creating ongoing civic dilemmas and social anxieties. Racial segregation results in continual geographic constriction for Black people. Queer baiting and gay bashing indicate that many social locations are not welcoming to those with nonnormative sexual identities, so sexual minorities are at risk in public and private spaces. Racial and sexual vulnerabilities manifest predominantly as *spatial* vulnerabilities in the Black diasporic imaginary. However, what does it mean to have to move through a space bound by injury and defined by restriction—but not complete constraint? This question forms the basis of this book, and each chapter addresses a different component of this question. I expose and dwell on these checks to agency. For some critics, the checks are so extreme and so permeating historically that it becomes difficult—if not impossible—to speak of Black agency or even Black being. Calvin Warren uses the term *Black being* with its unique typographic presentation of the strikethrough to visualize this ontological dilemma of the ongoing denial of Black subjectivity.¹³ I do not want to ignore how those constraints are sometimes avoided, mitigated, and made less threatening even if that symbolic stroke against Black being (~~being~~) that cancels out identity and presence seems ever-impending. Constraint is constant, but it is not necessarily total. I do not contradict or disregard the multiple ways in which Black subjectivity is denied from an epistemological standpoint, nor do I want to undermine the impact of critical discussions of Black social death. Works by such critics as Warren, Jared Sexton, and Frank Wilderson are highly instructive and help me to elucidate the social threats that pinion Black life.¹⁴ That being said, throughout, this book focuses on how those threats and constraints get negotiated—sometimes successfully, oftentimes not. This book turns attention to a consideration of how life gets lived and how desire gets expressed within the context of serial, encircling injury.

In exploring the relationship among race, sexuality, and space, *Black Queer Freedom* builds upon literary-critical work that thinks about space generally in relation to African American and Black diasporic culture: Melvin Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* (1987); Thadious M. Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature* (2012); Stéphane Robolin, *Grounds of Engagement: Apartheid-Era African American and South African Writing* (2015); and Rashad Shabazz, *Spatializing Blackness: Architectures of Confinement and Black Masculinity in Chicago* (2015).¹⁵ Such texts link geography to literary and cultural theory in innovative ways. The current project thinks explicitly about how the question of sexuality reframes the exploration of the connections between racial

identity and physical spaces and, moreover, focuses on artwork by sexual minorities. In the twenty-first century, increasing attention has been given to the contributions of Black gay, lesbian, and transgender artists, especially in the wake of *Queer of Color Critique* and the advent of Black queer studies. Very little work has sought to use critical spatial analysis and spatial methodologies to make sense of the cultural and intellectual work these artists and activists have done. *Black Queer Freedom* helps to fill that critical gap.

My thinking about the Black queer body in spaces of injury is indebted to specific trends in the field of critical geography, particularly, conversations around the politics of scale. A thinker who has arguably done much to develop this concept is Neil Smith.¹⁶ He explains that scale “demarcates the sites of social contest, the object as well as the resolution of contest. [. . .] It is geographic scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested.”¹⁷ He uses the concept of scale, which is always socially constructed, to provide a language for dealing with spatial difference or, put differently, to account for different experiences of space. In my reading, the scale framework marks not only a way to be attentive to distinctions among regional, national, and global spaces but also a way to prevent thinking of space as being homogeneous or necessarily registering meaning in the same way for individuals with different identities. Space is not self-evident, empty of meaning, or homogeneous. Smith points to a way to recognize spatial differentiation through scale. What is implicit in Smith’s analysis, which is highlighted here, is the idea that this construction is informed by the social readings of the body.

Treva Ellison thoughtfully enriches Smith’s analysis by emphasizing how Blackness functions as a scalar category in that it “draws into relief the multiple and contradictory social, economic, and political processes that collide to constitute kinds of places.”¹⁸ They argue that social relations and tensions produce different kinds of spaces, and, in turn, those spaces influence social relations.¹⁹ For Ellison, thinking in terms of scale means paying attention to a structural feedback loop that describes the construction of space in relationship to Black embodiment. This dynamic does not just mirror the feedback loop I describe as surrounding the Black queer body and as constituting the space of injury; Ellison and I are identifying the same set of social relations that surround the Black (queer) body. In discussing Black vulnerability, Ellison insists, “Harm and violence circulate around black queer or black LGBT embodiment but also abstracts the spatial relationship between harm, violence, and multiple embodiments of blackness” (324). Ellison asserts that harm follows and encircles Black queer bodies, but they also make the point that we are not always able to discern

that there is a spatial relationship between violence and embodiments of Blackness. Scale as a framework helps us to put that relationship in focus. I take seriously Ellison's point, and in the argument developed in this book, I emphasize how spatialized injury is a central component of Black queer experience throughout the diaspora. Big Freedia establishes the link between her queerness and violence through the framing clause "as a gay boy in the hood." Only by thinking about her desiring, nonnormative body within the specific location of her southern, urban community with its cultural norms, socioeconomic pressures, and specific geographical environment can we fully understand the kind of physical and emotional threat she faced. Her means of expressing her sense of possible injury resonates with the logic of the politics of scale that Smith and Ellison detail.

The injury tracked across the chapters results from excessive public attention given to queer bodies. Racial and sexual minorities are subjects who are always made susceptible to public attention and have their access to privacy and interiority interrupted. My point is not that the private cannot exist for these individuals; I am more interested in charting how these marginalized subjects negotiate those public spaces that seek to define, control, erase, and distort them. Public space is at best unpredictable if not dangerous for Black and queer subjects, creating possibilities of injury. Black populations have been subjected to long histories of surveillance—by the state, corporations, and private individuals, which have rendered them hypervisible.²⁰ The constant scrutiny of Blackness means that this identity space never escapes public attention. This situation is a condition of the extensive public attention to Blackness.²¹ Such constant scrutiny results in the actions of one individual representing the actions of an entire community; a single individual (or individual's actions) is always a stand-in for the entire group. In terms of LGBTQ individuals, legal questions of equality have pivoted around issues of privacy, as *Lawrence v. Texas* illustrates.²² However, the struggle for equality has primarily concerned social and legislative *public recognition*, as *Obergefell v. Hodges* and campaigns for gay marriage show internationally.²³ Being out has become an important political act linked to self-realization and progressive activism for many queer communities; the concept itself has to do with broadcasting the sexual interior into the public realm. Being public about nonnormative desire (in hopes of recognition) has been a recurring strategy to ensure the possibility of personal safety and privacy. One must also not forget the recurrence of acts of physical violence against Black LGBTQ people, especially gender-nonconforming people; these actions are stern reminders of the dangers of the public to the nonnormative.²⁴ Marginalized communities often have strained relationships to the public world. My focus is on those

individuals who negotiate multiple kinds of marginalization characterized by public attention: racial, sexual, and gender minorities. This book considers the understandings of the public that emerge from these perspectives.

The near-constant public attention to the minority body means that physical privacy is not always available. Many Black queer artists represent privacy as unstable and unreliable because of their positionality and desires. In his collection *Private Affairs*, Phillip Brian Harper examines the many dimensions of privacy's instability for minorities.²⁵ Instead of simply arguing for a right to privacy (in terms of spaces and relationships) alone, the artists and thinkers that will be discussed show the public processes by which privacy is threatened. There is an exploration of the mechanisms that make privacy possible for some and unattainable for others who move through spaces of injury. In addition to elucidating the multiple ways privacy is interrupted and fragmented, these artists also model a response to these feelings of trespass. Cultural producers throughout the diaspora recognize how private spaces are often invaded and circumscribed, and in response, they use art to create possibilities for interiority in the face of the denial of physical and relational privacy. As Harper explains, notions of privacy are historically wrapped up in ideas of property ownership and discriminatory racialization. I think interiority is an alternate spatial concept that signals a shift to thinking about sites of felt psychic and emotional safety that evade and push against the forceful control and definition of the minority body. I borrow this concept of interiority from Elizabeth Alexander but use it as a way to describe the role that art plays in offering a symbolic space to art practitioners and consumers when physical spaces are threatening.²⁶ What this book tracks is a movement from privacy to interiority made possible through art as a way to evade the acts that undermine literal spaces of privacy. Because spaces of privacy are difficult to extract from public attention, interiority comes to describe spaces made possible through the imagination and artistic practice that elude such attention. The social context of injury results in a steadfast commitment to the value of interiority, which artistic projects make possible.

The attention given to injury might lead one to suspect that this project would be one about legal redress. Part of the conceptual dilemma of political redress as a strategy is that it depends upon the state for recognition and resolution. However, the state and state-backed institutions are at the heart of injury, as each of the following chapters shows. A project focused on redress may leave the site of the state unexamined and not fully critiqued. In making this point, I am indebted to political theorist Wendy Brown's critique of progressive thought. She complains that many leftists have become apologists for the state because it is seen as a device to protect individuals

from the abuse of the market, but these leftists fail to hold the state accountable for its actions or its active influencing of market forces.²⁷ However, the Black queer artists examined here are not primarily motivated by the goal of political redress, as such. Their works collectively elucidate social injury and implicate state action continually. Rather than prioritizing calls for political redress in response to seemingly ubiquitous threats of injury, the artists from across the diaspora brought together here highlight the affective dimensions of discrimination and argue for art as a means for addressing material and psychic injury. The aesthetic documentation and exploration of injury become ways to articulate oppositional subject positions and assert transgressive forms of desire. Big Freedia describes performing at her shows, with all their sexual innuendo and playfulness of gender expression, as experiences of “healing and transformation,” especially in the context of displacement and federal neglect following the decimation of Hurricane Katrina.²⁸ Artistic redress becomes more attractive and is put on par with traditional emphases on political redress.

Black Queer Freedom examines and offers to the reader an original archive of writing and art by diasporic Black queer cultural producers. Representations of queer identity and desire in the diaspora are the focus, and non-normative desire is the primary concern for assessing Black embodiment globally. This move to think about queerness and conceptions of the Black diaspora shows how my work is in conversation with Nadia Ellis’s scholarship. In *Territories of the Soul*, Ellis uses queerness as a framing construct to form a theory of diasporic connection rooted in failed affinity and incompleteness. She understands queer diasporic belonging as a way to point out how “insufficiency of modes of belonging” can exist alongside the “awareness of new forms” of connection that remain “elusive.”²⁹ For Ellis, queerness is a methodological approach that uncovers historic and ongoing expressions of diasporic belonging and connection. Although she does talk about non-normative sexual identity, queerness is primarily a structural framework, throughout her analysis, for articulating modes of affinity and belonging. Taking a different tack, I use diaspora as a method or approach to develop a way of assessing queer identity and desire. My primary motivation does not concern offering a theorization of diaspora or showing how diasporic connections get expressed in arguably rebellious ways. For me, the use of diaspora is a method for approaching and connecting a range of texts that do not share national or cultural affiliations but do share motifs and strategies. The diaspora is the frame through which analysis is provided and not the explicit object of analysis itself. I discuss texts from the United States, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Jamaica (via Canada), among other

locations—real and imagined—and locate common methods for attending to the Black queer subject across geographies. In differing contexts, this book explores how queerness produces specific kinds of injury and social limitations because of anti-Black racism and homophobia, both of which are gender inflected. The diasporic method, thinking across geographic locations and different cultural and historical settings, helps me elucidate the challenges to Black queer identity as well as the ways that artists in different nations and regions use similar aesthetic strategies in attending to Black queerness.

Even though a methodological employment of diaspora is emphasized, my project does effectively offer a spatial conceptualization of diaspora that builds on previous thinkers and enhances the engagement of the politics of scale. The Black diaspora, a dynamic site that exists beyond and above individuals, regions, or nations, has been theorized through different spatial frameworks. Ellis describes it as a space of affective belonging, Brent Hayes Edwards as fragmentation and articulation, Rinaldo Walcott as cultural borrowing and exchange, and Michelle Stephens as embodied movement.³⁰ Implicit in all of these expressions of diaspora as a racialized space is the notion of risk. Conceptions about diasporic belonging, connection, exchange, and movement all introduce the possibility of risk, including contempt, misunderstandings, rejection, loss, and detainment. To be a part of the diaspora means having to come to terms with an uncertainty that can be as threatening as it is enlightening or constructive. One of the minor points suggested in advancing my claims about Black queer subjects as injury-bound is that the Black diaspora is not simply a space of different kinds of relation but it is also a contested space of risk because it “defines the boundaries and bounds the identities” of the bodies that help to constitute it.³¹

Doing this work does not mean only thinking about the particular practices of queer artists in isolation. It also means turning to the work of heterosexual artists whose projects become touchstones for the work of queer artists and whose projects help to contextualize the specific achievements of queer art. For this reason I use work by such writers as Gil Scott-Heron and Etheridge Knight to frame my analyses of queer artists. In addition, as much as I want to spend time thinking about aesthetic strategies, I cannot produce a project about Black diasporic artists without attending to historical realities and culturally specific factors that shape artworks from different countries or regions. The chapters present analyses of political poems, novelistic prose, journalistic essays, memoiristic fiction, and visual art. In the process, these discussions will also shed light on mental-health legislation in South Africa, Canadian immigration policy, histories of radical social uprisings, shifts in prison policies, and other assessments of political realities. These

and many other histories and bodies of knowledge are crucial to telling this story because understanding the complexities of the injury-bound subject means coming to terms with the social and political contexts that enable the spatialization of injury at the local, regional, and national level. Each chapter offers a specific social history that functions as the context for and that informs the content of the artistic work that is analyzed. This approach keeps the analysis from ignoring distinctions between different geographic locations or making the diaspora one indistinct location. As critics, such as Edwards, have made clear, the Black diaspora is not a where; it is a process.³² Further, as a method, it is one that moves (in terms of its focus) and that centralizes the concept of movement—particularly, the movement of bodies and ideas through space. *Black Queer Freedom* explores how the queer body moves or is kept from moving through and across space—whether a street, a border, or a building. This focus on movement is crucial because it indicates what threats of injury try to circumvent: physical movement through a community, movement up the social and/or economic ladder, movement into neighborhoods, or the moving circuit of desire between people.

“Threatened Bodies in Motion” and “Bodies in Spaces of Injury,” the two parts of the book, are organized around my interest in queer bodies in space. Each section attends to how perceptions of the Black queer body in different environments create uncertainty for that body and make the body and the space around it contested spaces because of racial and sexual meaning associated with those bodies. The structural organization of the book developed out of my conceptual engagement of the politics of scale. Part 1 illustrates the recurring denial of the freedom of movement for racial and sexual minorities through *acts of interruption*, which manifest in many ways, including having police and other state officials stop or detain individuals discriminatorily, having access to public facilities (such as, bathrooms) limited, having individuals interfere with one’s employment possibilities, and having someone intimate (or enact) physical harm. Whether it is walking, driving, protesting, or crossing national borders, the movement of queer bodies through physical space and across geographies is hindered by acts of interruption, and these acts create injury. Chapter 1, “Movement in Black: Queer Bodies and the Desire for Spatial Justice,” examines movement through communities and, especially, the halted movement on urban streets. Using the poetry of African American writers Cheryl Clarke and Pat Parker, the chapter shows how the Black spatial restriction that results from both state and individual actions yields a desire for spatial justice, a concept that describes the recognition that space is contested alongside a claim to the right to access and move freely through the social world. These Black feminist poetic claims to spatial justice

made in the historical context of civil rights legislative advancements and urban uprisings reveal the incomplete nature of social change and situate queer desire as a means for re-creating the self and the social world.

Chapter 2, "Geographies of Risk: Migratory Subjects and the Uncertainty of Travel," shifts focus from movement through urban spaces to immigration or movement across national lines. The fictional works of Makeda Silvera and Dionne Brand are the subjects of the analysis and are put in conversation with feminist ethnographies of Caribbean women labor migrants. These literary projects and oral histories emphasize the loss of privacy that accompanies migratory movement. However, the works also demonstrate how desire can become a path to escape from the social constriction of migration. These two chapters, which explore interrupted movement, indicate how the queer body in motion, especially the queer female body in motion, is vulnerable. The chapters show how the assertion of desire as a means of agency becomes the artistic retort to the social construction of vulnerability.

The second part of the book, "Bodies in Spaces of Injury," transitions from movement through the social world to movement through institutions. This section develops from the idea that institutions function as instruments of injury from the perspective of queer artists. The institutions most often considered are those connected to the state and dominant ideologies and less so the kinds of grassroots institutions that minority communities create for themselves.³³ Even in the context of the development of organizations to protect and sustain minority communities, artists and thinkers continue to understand institutions as sites of power that depend on restrictive modes of definition as well as dynamics of belonging and exclusion. The artists discussed here turn to certain kinds of institutions as they explore the social and psychic checks to their sense of freedom, and I uncover a recurring wariness of institutions and how their influence moves across space. In this context, institutions less often operate through acts of interruption; instead, they rely upon *processes of exposure*. The built environments of institutions are not only spaces of enclosure; they are spaces of exposure. Institutions seek to make the minority body visible to public view and control the movement and meaning of the body through this exposure. Attention in this part then turns to the histories and representations of two kinds of institutional spaces to make this point: prisons and health facilities.³⁴ Critical attention to the prison-industrial complex has become an elemental component of African American studies; one only has to consider the field-defining work of Joy James, Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Michelle Alexander. However, few studies emphasize the experiences of incarcerated sexual minorities and gender-nonconforming individuals.³⁵ Another increasingly important

line of inquiry across multiple disciplines is health care and the relationship between medical establishments and other institutions. The emergence of medical humanities as a field has encouraged these conversations as have important works about race, health, and medical abuse.³⁶

Prisons and hospitals are important sites for thinking about spatialized processes of racialization as well as the control of sexual identity, so the second section concentrates on them. Chapter 3, “Uneven Vulnerability: Queer Hypervisibility and Spaces of Imprisonment,” tracks the experiences of gay men in US prisons. Through a discussion of texts collected in the anthology *Blackheart 2: A Journal of Writing and Graphics by Black Gay Men* and the autobiographical *Memoir: Delaware County Jail*, the chapter demonstrates that although the queer body is never able to escape institutional processes of exposure and the physical and psychological threats they pose to queer bodies, artists use desire to disrupt enforced visibility and assert autonomy even within the space of control. Chapter 4, “The Shadow of Institutions: Medical Diagnosis and the Elusive Queer Body,” continues the consideration of institutional exposure and control of the queer body by turning to medical facilities and their representatives. I find that writers represent medical treatment and diagnosis as violent means for rendering the queer body visible, and this public “opening” of the body objectifies individuals and requires the loss of privacy. The chapter concentrates on novels by South African writer K. Sello Duiker and Scottish writer Jackie Kay and argues that these authors employ queer desire and identity as a device for countering the invasive nature of the medical gaze and for creating a sense of oppositional, sensual interiority in the context of exposure. These two chapters illustrate how social ideologies around race and gender inform circuits of desire and how artists imagine possibilities for self-determination in the context of institutions’ attempts to expose the queer body to intrusive attention.

The attempt to sketch out the parameters of the queer subject as the injury-bound subject draws to a close with a meditation on the concept of contingency. The conclusion, “Lives of Constraint, Paths to Freedom,” offers the idea of contingency as a way to describe succinctly the constant state of uncertainty that derives from the transgression of the protocols of gender expression and sexual identity. I use contingency to acknowledge the realities of social restriction while always leaving space for agency and the repudiation of such attempts at control or violence. Zanele Muholi’s photographs of South African queer women are taken up briefly to showcase the artistic expression of contingency. Muholi’s work—alongside the texts examined here—exemplifies artistic redress, which describes texts that seek to address social inequities through aesthetic projects while critiquing the typical state-

derived means for resolving such inequities. Such redress becomes a means for acknowledging and moving through the space of contingency, a space in which injury is unpredictable. I contend that art should not be used merely to serve the purpose of helping to secure social and political conceptions of freedom. Because it can document atrocities, offer a mirror to the social world, explore complexities of relationships, and present visions of alternative future, art is not only a reflection of political possibilities. Artistic production must be understood as a parallel path to freedom, and it is this idea that closes this study. This final move of emphasizing artistic redress and artistic production within the bounds of injury allows me to suggest that art should not only serve the purpose of endorsing political means of freedom; art is a site of Black queer freedom itself in that it offers a way to reckon with personal and collective experiences of injury.

Ultimately, *Black Queer Freedom* shows that the threat of the beatdown that Big Freedia discusses is all too real, but she, like other queer individuals throughout the diaspora, finds ways to negotiate that risk and imagine a life beyond it through desire. Injury is a perpetual reality, but desire creates space for movement and possibility within it. By following the argument traced out over the following chapters, one comes to understand that the only path to freedom is paved with injury, but desire points the way forward.

PART ONE

THREATENED BODIES IN MOTION

1. MOVEMENT IN BLACK

Queer Bodies and the Desire for Spatial Justice

The American Streets resembled
nothing so much as one vast, howling,
unprecedented orphanage.

—James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street*

James Baldwin's autobiographical book-length essay *No Name in the Street* (1972) is an extended consideration of the social and political scene of the United States in the late 1960s.¹ In it, Baldwin describes the civil rights struggle as the “American crisis” (475), and he goes on to explore the set of problems facing the realization of Black freedom. The most significant obstacle to this freedom is the circulating idea that African Americans “must know their place” (463). Baldwin means this idea figuratively in terms of social station, but he also means it literally as the practices of racial segregation and housing-market redlining illustrate. The challenge facing Black freedom is a problem of spatial restriction and alienation, and this idea gets registered in his comparison of the American streets to a “vast, howling, unprecedented orphanage” (468). The streets resemble an orphanage in terms of the placement of African Americans in the social realm. The metaphor conveys the idea of homelessness and describes the lack of freedom of movement. The street is figured as a space of enclosure (an orphanage) instead of mobility. Orphans have few protections, are perpetually controlled, have compromised agency, and are often figured as undesirable in the social imaginary. Through this powerful metaphor, Baldwin characterizes African American existence at the beginning of the post-civil rights era in terms of the absence of connections and resources and in terms of spatial restriction.

The use of the framework of space—and geography, in particular—to discuss African American life is not particular to Baldwin; it is a frequent

element within Black literary culture.² However, a specific triangulation of civil rights, space, and the queer body emerges in the work of Black gay and lesbian writers, such as Baldwin, in the post–civil rights era. The experience of Black queer life reveals a multivalent spatial restriction that highlights the boundaries of civil rights advancement and questions the progress narrative most often associated with the US civil rights movement. This chapter presents the argument that Black gay and lesbian artists take up the question of *spatial justice* in their works because they recognize the particular social insecurity for those who sit at the intersection of racial and sexual minority existence. The desire for spatial justice reflects the goal of circumventing the threat of injury in the social world. Black gay and lesbian artists contend with the spatialized inequality that eludes legislation and policy changes and that comes to define Black queer life, in general.

By spatial justice, I refer to the artistic, philosophical, and activist project of describing the ongoing denial of freedom of movement for minorities that is paired with the claims of the right of mobility and the right to occupy public space. Spatial justice consists of a minority asserting a proprietary right to the public realm and the public record, which legislation and majority public opinion have contentiously defined. It is a framework that expresses desires to occupy and to move through the social world autonomously, capacities that have been historically denied because of race, gender, and/or sexual identity. In making this argument about Black queer artists and spatial justice, this chapter builds on the critical contributions of geographers and spatial theorists, especially, Edward Soja and Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos. However, my work departs from these thinkers in three ways: the focus on the contributions that artistic productions make to spatial theory; the attention to how historical knowledge shapes spatial understanding; and the emphasis on the queer implications of spatial justice. Finding that urban streets are dangerous for racial and sexual populations even in the context of shifts in policies, Black queer artists imagine spatial justice as the antidote for historic and ongoing social restriction. An artistic focus on the queer body recalibrates theoretical approaches to space.

The poetry of the Black lesbian cultural producers Cheryl Clarke and Pat Parker is integral to establishing this notion of spatial justice because both articulate post–civil rights era African American identity as a manifestation of a spatialized civic dilemma, and both situate the Black queer body as the mechanism for asserting this idea. To set up the analysis of the work of Clarke and Parker, the chapter explores the spatial implications of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and how this piece of legislation fails to transform the Black experience of spatial restriction by looking at the “riots” that occur

after the passage of the bill. From there, the chapter offers a theorization of spatial justice and uses Clarke's poetry to elaborate this conception. Through her poetic mapping of urban spaces, Clarke details the kinds of violence that racial and sexual minorities face and that create feelings of spatial alienation because of being denied access to the social world. Building on Clarke's work, Parker's poetry shows how artists not only make claims for public space but also begin to call for a transformation of the public world. This transformation moves beyond a world in which racial identity and sexual preference endanger an individual. Both artists draw attention to how public space is laden with histories of oppression even as these artists seek to attribute new meanings through their assertions of autonomy and desire so that public space, here the space of the street, is always a contested site. This chapter reveals how calls for spatial justice, which derive from ongoing Black spatial restriction, result in artistic projects concerned with queer self- and world-making even in the context of layered conflict.

The consideration of these ideas begins by focusing on the framework and cultural ramifications of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because it is seen as one of the most important pieces of US civil rights legislation of the twentieth century and because it emphasizes the reconfiguration of public space as the proper means for undoing legacies of discrimination. This omnibus act consolidates and provides more enforcement power to two previous legislative iterations: the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and the Civil Rights Act of 1960. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is made up of eleven major titles (or sections). Important titles in the 1964 version mandate: banning voter-registration requirements (title 1), prohibiting the denial of access in public facilities (title 3), prohibiting discrimination by government agencies that receive federal funding (title 6), and prohibiting employment discrimination (title 7). Here, attention is given to title 2, which outlaws discrimination in public accommodations engaged in interstate commerce. This component of the law promotes equity in terms of access to the social world. It seeks to guarantee freedom of movement through public space—as the grounding concept of interstate commerce intimates. The legislators chose to focus on the commerce clause of the US Constitution in creating the document, meaning that issues of mobility lie at the heart of this rendering of legislative change. First considered are the spatial implications of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, followed by two historical urban incidents that demonstrate the limits of the act's impact, all of which sets up the *desire* for spatial justice.

Mobility in several registers is central to the legislative logic of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Legislators crafted the act around the commerce clause in article 1, section 8, of the Constitution to ban discrimination in public places:

“The Congress shall have Power [. . .] to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and *among the several States*, and with the Indian Tribes; [. . .] To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers.”³ Interstate commerce and citizen mobility serve as the reasoning for arguing for federal intervention in racial discrimination. In an August 1963 statement to the US House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy explains,

Arbitrary and unjust discrimination in places of public accommodation insults and inconveniences the individuals affected, inhibits the mobility of our citizens, and artificially burdens the free flow of commerce. [. . .] The effects of discrimination in public establishments are not limited to the embarrassment and frustration suffered by the individuals who are its most immediate victims. Our whole economy suffers. When large retail stores or places of amusement, whose goods have been obtained through interstate commerce, artificially restrict the market to which these goods are offered, the Nation’s business is impaired. [. . .] Discrimination in public accommodations not only contradicts our basic concepts of liberty and equality, but such discrimination interferes with interstate commerce and the development of unobstructed national market.⁴

Discrimination is not about individual frustrations or the dilemmas of one particular group in the nation; rather, it threatens the stability of the US social world. Kennedy and his colleagues situate racial discrimination as a challenge to an ostensibly healthy capitalist economy. The legal reasoning makes the freedom of movement of people (and goods) crucial to the structure of civil rights discourse. The act has woven into its structure a valuation of unrestrained mobility within and throughout, which gets connected to national vigor and the definition of full citizenship. The desire for equal access to public spaces that Kennedy describes lies at the heart of civil rights activists’ strategizing.⁵

As much as interstate commerce is about transactions and the world of publicly funded business affairs, it also concerns the control of movement between localities. The attention to interstate commerce pertains to the legislation of public space and the determining of what counts as public space. This move expands the reach of federal state power, but it also allows a freedom of civic movement, as Kennedy’s comments indicate. The dismantling of historic spatial restrictions (i.e., segregationist social systems) in terms of literal and figurative social boundaries has meant that questions of mobility, space, and access have become critical elements of civil rights discussions even in the wake of significant legislation. Title 2 of the Civil Rights Act of

1964 and the act in general attempt to reconfigure the social realm. Dismantling segregation involves restructuring the social world. It is not just about a change in the legal landscape; instead, it evidences an attempt to reimagine how we conceptualize social space to undo the foundations of a nationwide geography of restriction. The reproduction of public space is the goal here. Such reimagining was and continues to be the precise terrain of civil rights. Critics who talk about the production of space do not generally do so in terms of shifts in civil rights discourse.⁶ Thinking about civil rights necessarily means thinking about space.

Although this monumental act concerns ensuring access to public spaces of commerce (publicly funded places), one wonders, What happens outside of and in between those protected sites of commerce?⁷ What happens in the streets? Streets, especially urban streets, prove to be highly dangerous and expose the vulnerability of the Black body even after the advent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁸ Two significant incidents that occurred soon after the passage of this piece of legislation demonstrate this point: the Harlem–Bedford-Stuyvesant uprising in July 1964 and the Newark uprising in July 1967.⁹ The Harlem uprising began on July 16, two weeks after the Civil Rights Act was enacted. On Thursday, July 16, James Powell, a fifteen-year-old summer-school student and resident of the Bronx Soundview public housing project, was shot by Lieutenant Thomas Gilligan, who was out of uniform and not on duty, in the Manhattan Upper East Side neighborhood of Yorkville. That morning, building superintendent Patrick Lynch was hosing down the sidewalk in front of the buildings he managed and noticed that a number of young Black students from the nearby junior high school were hanging out on the stoop or front steps of one of the buildings. This lounging had been happening regularly, and the superintendent had grown frustrated with the students’ occupation of these areas and their general presence on his block. Lynch sprayed the students with his hose. The young men claimed that it was done with malice and that Lynch also uttered, “Dirty Niggers, I will wash you clean.”¹⁰ Lynch insisted that it was a mere accident. Either way, the situation escalated. This action—even if accidental—carried with it racialized meaning, given the frequency of police turning hoses on Black people as a form of crowd control and to exercise power over agitators during the 1960s. In response to being soaked forcefully, the boys threw bottles and garbage-can lids at Lynch, attracting the attention of other boys nearby, including Powell. Joining in the fracas, Powell ran inside the building followed by an agitated Lynch. Gilligan was nearby and rushed to the scene to get matters under control. There is much disagreement on the exact course of events among those present that day, but Gilligan shot Powell three times as Powell exited

the building. He did not get help in time and died soon thereafter. The death led to public accusations of police brutality, excessive force, and discrimination, as well as a picketing of the school. After Powell's funeral in Harlem, which was held two days later, many of the attendees decided to march to the Twenty-Eighth Precinct police headquarters on Seventh Avenue. A confrontation with police ensued, with gunfire coming from the precinct forces. Four days of picketing, ransacking stores, and assembling resulted, which spread from Harlem to Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. Increased police presence and rain ultimately quelled the action of the mourners and protestors.¹¹

The uprising in Newark came three years later, in 1967, after social upheavals in other cities, such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Jersey City, New Jersey; and Rochester, New York; and after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Once again, the setting is a warm summer day—the evening instead of the morning. Black taxi driver John Smith was pulled over by two Newark police officers, Vito Pontrelli and Oscar De Simone. It is not clear why Smith was stopped or why the situation became violent. Pontrelli and De Simone claimed that Smith had tailed them, turned the wrong way on a street, and was belligerent when pulled over. Smith claimed that the police car was double-parked, so he signaled and went around it; he was pulled over, berated, and then punched by the officers. In any event, Smith was pulled from the car, beaten, and taken into custody for resisting arrest and assaulting an officer. Upon arrival at the precinct, the police officers were witnessed dragging a seemingly unconscious Smith into the building. Other taxi drivers circulated news of the arrest and transported people to a demonstration—some feared that Smith had been beaten to death. People rushed to the precinct station. As in Harlem, police stormed out of the precinct to control the demonstration, which led to a violent confrontation. An overwhelming uprising broke out in the Central Ward of Newark that went on for five days: “More than 1,100 sustained injuries; approximately 1,400 were arrested, some 350 arsons damaged private and public buildings; millions of dollars of merchandise was destroyed or stolen; and law enforcement expended 13,326 rounds of ammunition.”¹² All off-duty police were called to action, and the governor later called out the state troopers as well as the National Guard. A front-page *New York Times* article from the next day, July 13, reports, “Bands of Negroes went through a heavily Negro neighborhood in South Newark last night and early today smashing windows and looting stores.” The assembled are also described as “rampaging gangs” in the article. As this piece demonstrates, the public narrative about the event tended to characterize the protestors in negative ways. The violence and destruction were monumental. Later that year New Jersey governor Richard J. Hughes

authorized a report to figure out what had happened and how to address the attendant social problems: *The New Jersey Governor's Commission Report of Action* (1968). The report offered a more nuanced picture of the protestors and the conditions in which they lived. It opens with the image of a young Black boy peering apprehensively outside his door.¹³ The image suggests a fear of going outside, that dangers lurk on the street. The commissioners that produced the report chronicle—even if inadvertently—a lack of freedom of movement in the public world. This idea frames the study of racial conflict in urban space.

These two events in relatively adjacent urban areas concern racial tension, excessive police violence, housing segregation, the lack of economic resources, and the monitoring of the boundaries of communities. What unites these incidents are Black frustrations with spatial matters and embodied movement. The inciting event for the occurrences in Harlem has to do with the lack of access to public space. Lynch is upset about the youth on the stoop and about the fact that these boys from a different neighborhood inhabit the block and his street. Gilligan's gunshot is an unfortunate and fatal extension of Lynch's space-denying water hose. Both are acts of interruption. The tumult in Newark results from the police officer's willful interruption of Smith's movement along a street. In one instance, Black individuals are denied access to space; in the other, an individual's movement is impeded. Both events and the turmoil that resulted illustrate spatial denial and restriction.¹⁴

As the New Jersey governor's *Report of Action* indicates, much time was spent and much ink was used trying to make sense of why days-long confrontations occurred. In response to this recurring questioning that happened in city halls and classrooms and on street corners, Black gay civil rights activist and writer Bayard Rustin opines:

But why, asks white America, do the Negroes riot now—not when conditions are at their worse but when they seem to be improving? Why now, after all of the civil rights and antipoverty legislation? There are two answers. First, "progress" has been considerably less than is generally supposed. While the Negro has won certain important legal and constitutional rights (voting, desegregation of public accommodations, etc.), his relative socioeconomic position has scarcely improved. *There simply has not been significant, visible change in his life.* Second, if a society is interested in stability, it should either not make promises or it should keep them. Economic and social deprivation, if accepted by its victims as their lot in life, breeds passivity, even docility. [...] the young Negroes are right: the promises made to them were good and necessary and long, long overdue. The youth were right to believe in them. The only trouble is that they were not fulfilled.¹⁵

Rustin often had severe criticism for “the young Negroes,” a younger generation more aligned with Black Power than his own espoused civil rights strategies. In the context of the lack of real change, he has a more generous perspective on younger activists. As the word *position* intimates, even in the midst of important change, the social status of Black citizens remained unchanged. Rustin relies upon a spatial understanding to describe social inequality—as Baldwin would do five years later when he criticizes the societal belief that African Americans need to “know their place.” The idea of the unfulfilled promise that Rustin references has gained traction in the *post*-civil rights era. He points to this idea in response to activism—even when he disagrees with the activists. If one were succinctly to describe Black perceptions of social life in the United States, this might be the best way to do so: unfulfilled promises. That which was promised through the Civil Rights Act was a remedying of spatial restriction and the securing of mobility through the public realm. This understanding is the promise that is denied and for which there has remained collective longing.

The urban protesting concerned excessive force, discrimination, and the denial of spatial justice, which legislation hoped to effect. Soja, among other geographers, understands spatial justice primarily in terms of addressing resource disparity between different geographical locations and recognizing the need for redistributions as well as the activism that seeks such reordering.¹⁶ The undergirding idea of his analysis is that redistribution would constitute a form of civic justice. This thought is useful, as it allows one to make parallels between access to civic liberties and access to material resources. However, critical theorist Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos’s conception of spatial justice is especially valuable in making sense of African American complaints about inequality in the wake of the Civil Rights Act.¹⁷ Philippopoulos asserts that spatial justice “is the conflict between bodies that are moved by a desire to occupy the same space at the same time.”¹⁸ Rather than just thinking about inequity in terms of the geographic distribution of or access to resources, Philippopoulos emphasizes how contested space lies at the heart of spatial justice. For him, spatial justice is not a solution in terms of its being an appropriate response to problems in the social world. It outlines the dilemma of spatial conflict and poses questions that seek to address the conflict.

Building on this line of thought, I maintain that spatial justice attends to the movement of bodies, specifically, those bodies that have been historically restricted and regulated because of social beliefs about minority racial, class, and sexual identities. Paying attention to the different dilemmas that racial and sexual minority bodies face adds texture to the conceptualization of the concept. Spatial justice has public health, legal, and economic

parameters because all of these domains have been used to create layers of social restriction. Such restriction is a kind of social abuse that introduces the possibilities of other types of mistreatment and violence. The context for the desire for spatial justice is inevitably conflict because majoritarian bodies not only claim proprietary access to public space but these bodies are also understood as being coterminous with public space. The public is imagined as an extension of this socially dominant body. Minoritarian bodies that linger in the public are immediately seen as threats because they are symbolically encroaching upon majoritarian bodies by their presence and are then made vulnerable to social control and manipulation because of the perception. For example, the rise of policies against loitering have historically been aimed at racial and sexual minorities.¹⁹ Moreover, the sense of proprietary ownership is often registered in terms of public displays of desire. Heterosexual expressions of intimacy are seen as normative to and constitutive of social spaces; whereas, queer displays of intimacy are often seen as disruptive or out of line with the purposes of public space—private as opposed to appropriate public behavior.²⁰ In terms of policy making and public opinion, queer identity and intimacy are consistently seen as threatening. One might consider the debate surrounding North Carolina House Bill 2 (2016) regarding public restrooms: the idea of a transgender person in a bathroom led immediately to discussions of cisgender violation and the policing of transgender citizens' movements and privacy. The perceived threat of queerness creates the social conditions of queer vulnerability. Public space is understood to be a White, heterosexual, and cisgender space. This close connection of dominant, empowered bodies with the public means that spatial justice might entail displacement *and* embodied confrontation. The demand for spatial justice results from and results in inevitable conflict: seeking to occupy a space can quickly be seen as threatening others. Spatial justice does not simply make manifest the aspirations for equitable access; it represents a desire for recognition of minorities' proprietary right to space and recognition of a history of inequality that informs our interactions with social landscapes. Thinking through spatial justice means taking up histories of oppression and imagining new routes of movement.

The remainder of the chapter uses this understanding of spatial justice to analyze late twentieth-century African American poetry, specifically, the work of Clarke and Parker. My decision to place in the foreground these two writers is, in part, a move to address the general critical neglect of their work and to remind the reader of the significant places they hold in the realms of artistic production and social activism during the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. My goal is to situate these two cultural

producers as themselves theorists of space. They offer conceptual frameworks for evaluating the intersections among race, sexuality, and space while detailing how social and historical constraints are the contexts for the desire for spatial justice. Their poetic texts explore issues of racialized contested space and attend to the social upheavals that characterized the post-civil rights era historical moment and, particularly, those that impacted Black and queer populations. Public space is contested, and movement through public space is especially contentious in their poems. Clarke and Parker, Black feminist thinkers, add to the critical conceptualizations of spatial justice a conscious exploration of how public space is overwritten with multiple meanings and how for minority populations many of these meanings have consistently concerned restriction and erasure. The poet-theorists make clear that contested space is not only about the conflict of multiple claims but also about how interactions within public space are informed by historical inequities; past conflicts actively shape our current experience of space. The past is always with us, and it gives meaning and shape to space. The desire for spatial justice represents a wish to recognize social conflict and to document how legacies of discrimination define the relationship between minority bodies and the spaces surrounding them.

Clarke's poetry translates the need to recognize spatial conflict into poetic experiments of documentation. Put another way, she demonstrates how the desire for spatial justice yields *documentary poetics*. Critics often use the term *documentary poetics* as a way to talk about the relationship between literature and the public record. This understanding often means uncovering how literature can take on the role of the social archive. The term can also allude to thinking about the potential literary qualities of legal documents, as Emily Steiner argues.²¹ Although I am interested in literature's relationship to the public record—legal documents, journalism, and recorded accounts of social events, I am particularly attuned to how documentary poetics, in attending to the public record, can provide geographical renderings of public terrains and their affective compositions. Documentary poetics describes art forms that provide a detailed accounting of the world and that reproduce the contours of the physical realm, the conditions of movement, and the literal and symbolic geographies that supply the context for social action and artistic production. Such art traces the parameters of the public. I offer a theorizing of documentary poetic projects as always *spatial* and describe poetic projects that seek ethnographic and sometimes photographic mappings of the social realm as involved in the mission of spatial justice.

Documentary poetic projects are important components of African American literature during the 1960s and 1970s.²² Gil Scott-Heron's poetry collection

Small Talk at 125th and Lenox (1970) is an especially useful example;²³ he is an important cultural figure of Black artistic radicalism who worked across media. Pertinent to this discussion, his volume's emphasis on the social threats against Black communities and his exploration in other work of how sexual minorities are perceived as threatening set up the explicitly queer assessments of spatial justice that Clarke will later offer in her poems. *Small Talk* is a social documentary of contemporary Black life and a nationalist critique of the US public sphere expressed through poems and black-and-white photographs. The juxtaposition of photographs and poems in the 1970 volume makes clear the perils facing private and public Black social identity and articulates the Black Arts investment in multiple aesthetic modalities and forms. The title poem, "Small Talk at 125th and Lenox," situates the reader on the corner listening to two speakers discuss whether the recent social uprisings were wrong, the possibilities of getting high, and important elements of local gossip. The poem is in two sections: "Tell Me," which lists a number of questions to a listener, and "Listen," which is more of a monologue about the community. The two sections are not in exact conversation; the speaker in the second does not reply to the previous section's questions, and there is no response to the monologue. The constructed dialogue presents a synopsis of the bits of conversation that one can locate on the corner in question. The poem offers the reader the experience of walking down the street and hearing different parts of discussions, linked together because one is in physical motion, passing different individuals as they speak. It is a poem about movement, and Scott-Heron re-creates the spatial experience of walking the corner—and, perhaps, participating in the activity in this fragmented poem. An urban mapping emerges through semi-connected sound bites. The statements configure the intersection textually, and although there is not an actual conversation, the sections indicate how interaction and dialogue give shape to the street corner. The intersection of 125th and Lenox has affective meanings because of the individuals that live around and traverse through it and because of their relationships to each other. The section headings offer a structure, an explicitly dialogical structure, to the sonic chaos of the corner. There is not merely an attempt to document the sounds of this intersection; through the headings, the reader becomes aware of Scott-Heron's effort to make sense of it and share its meaning. The urban mapping creates order out of disorder.

The poetry collection has a number of photographs, which are a significant component of the project of urban mapping, and they help to show how this poetic mapping is an artistic meditation on spatial justice. The ten photographs, taken by Steve Wilson and included in *Small Talk*, feature Black people of different ages in an urban setting. The individuals photographed

are often presented in pairs or groups often talking or embracing. Pages 34 and 35 are completely covered by a photograph of five young boys playing on a park swing and looking at the camera and at each other. On page 37, the photograph is a group of four young boys squeezed together into the frame and smiling for the camera. The interaction and dialogue of the opening poem provide ways to read these photographs. This idea of interaction is echoed in each of the photographs that interrupt or bookend the poetic collection. This interfacing of different forms of media (poems and photographs) advances the idea of interactive intimacy. However, the photographs are also important because they signal the significance of bodies in space to the project. Scott-Heron performs his poetic mapping through providing images of bodies at and around 125th and Lenox. This mapping reflects the architecture of the street, and it expresses the emotional significance of urban space. Building on my earlier point, the photographs suggest that bodies bring meaning to space or, at least, enhance the meaning of space, and the space itself—this street in Harlem—offers the context in which we make sense of these bodies. An argument about the possibility of interaction and Black mobility in the setting of social dilemmas emerges through the juxtaposition of photographs and poems. This urban mapping reflects a claim to the space of the specific corner being diagrammed—and, by extension, urban space, in general—through the insistence on movement and interaction, an assertion about the significance of movement in the context of conflict.

I call attention to the relationship between the poems and the photographs in this collection to think about it as a mixed-media piece and to highlight Scott-Heron's own investment in mixed-media and cross-media projects, in general. Daniel Punday contends that the Black Arts movement, the renaissance in African American artistic production of the 1960s and 1970s, is a crucial site to consider in understanding the genealogy of multimedia art.²⁴ His point is that an impulse toward multimedia and cross-media art came to characterize the work of this period. In his mind, multimedia aesthetic projects are a response to the problems of connecting art to group experience. Punday develops his argument primarily out of Amiri Baraka's critical and creative work, but I think that Scott-Heron's body of work epitomizes the Black Arts-era multimedia zeitgeist. Scott-Heron is a master of the mixed-media technique; the linking of poems to photographs reflects this idea. However, he goes further by also translating this mixed-media form into a different technological medium. He later transforms his poetry collection into an eponymous debut music album in 1970, moving his geographic exploration and social analysis from the graphic and visual into the realm of the sonic.

The album *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox* reflects the artistic strategy of urban mapping and unexpectedly introduces the question of sexuality into the larger consideration of conflict and claims to urban space. The album contains recorded versions of eleven of the poems from the earlier collection. Four other tracks were written especially for the album, including the well-known anthem from the track “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.” This song-poem is often considered his most important selection on the album, if not in his entire career. The idea of revolution in this piece is a leitmotif in the collection as a whole. Notwithstanding this significance, I turn to a different track, “The Subject Was Faggots,” produced particularly for the album, to explain his triangulation of race, sex, and space. The preface to this curious piece explains that the poem’s speaker is headed to a party in a dance club at Thirty-Fourth Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan. Upon arrival he notices that there are two parties that night in the club. A party for queer men is in an adjacent part of the building. There is a division of the space of the dance house or club in terms of sexuality, and this demarcation of space is precisely the impetus for the poem-song. The gay men are characterized as laughing in a silly manner and dancing and cavorting ostentatiously as they wait to enter. The speaker of the poem is so caught up with the physical presence and movement of these Black queer bodies that the heterosexual dance party is completely forgotten about and never mentioned again in the piece. The speaker claims that had there been no sign on the door signaling the queer entertainment space as a queer party, he might have accidentally gone in, and the speaker expresses uncertainty about what would have happened next. The uncertainty and vagueness about what might have happened in the final moments of the song-poem suggest the possibility of the speaker’s fear that he might have gotten caught up in the revelry and “fagged out” himself, or given in to the pleasure of the event and created multiple kinds of intimacy with men. He recognizes that he might have become involved in or focused on this space in exactly the same manner that the song-poem does. The piece ends on a note of uncertainty but also unexpected *queer possibility*.

Part of the historical background for Scott-Heron’s contemplation of a queer ball at Thirty-Fourth and Eighth is the Stonewall uprising in New York City’s Greenwich Village in June 1969—one year before the publication of Scott-Heron’s book and the production of his vinyl album. The Stonewall “riot” has come to be known as a turning point in gay consciousness and activism in the United States. It began with a police raid on the gay bar the Stonewall Inn. Raids of gay bars were common but especially so in a mayoral election year as 1969 was. John D’Emilio explains:

The Stonewall was an especially inviting target [for a police raid]. Operating without a liquor license, reputed to have ties with organized crime, and offering scantily clad go-go boys as entertainment, it brought an “unruly” element to Sheridan Square, a busy Village intersection. Patrons of the Stonewall tended to be young and nonwhite. Many were drag queens, and many came from the burgeoning ghetto of runaways living across town in the East Village.²⁵

The Stonewall was not just a gay bar but a multiracial and working-class bar that provided a space for those who were homeless, un- or underemployed, and lonely. It was a space of refuge and possible income. Many of the patrons were already in precarious situations socially and economically as they were being removed from the bar by police and, for some of them, prepared to be arrested and taken to the Sixth Precinct police station. Inspired by other experiences in social activism and fed up with years of mistreatment and aggression, some of the patrons who had been removed began to yell at the cops and throw coins at them.²⁶ Then some patrons ran back into the Stonewall and barred the door to keep the police out and halt their arrests. What the history of the event documents is a scene of contested queer space. The incensed patrons defiantly claimed the space of the bar for themselves and refuted their mistreatment by the government officials.²⁷ This event sets in motion yearly Gay Pride marches in cities across the nation, which are themselves claims of social space—although they are approved by the municipalities and now often sponsored by corporations. The confrontation also contributed to the founding of Gay Liberation Front (GLF) federations in New York and all over the country. The vulnerability of these queer patrons made possible this state-backed intrusion and attempt to surveil and control them; however, the uprising also indicates the power and potential of queer protest. The queer population is ostensibly a powerless population being manipulated and controlled, but it transformed a situation of vulnerability to one of empowerment. This site of illicit leisure, pleasure, and labor also becomes a symbolic site for social change.

It is with these ideas about queer vulnerability as well as conflict and transformation, which then were circulating in the public imaginary, that one can understand fully the significance of the reference to the queer ball, which is located about thirty blocks northeast of the Stonewall Inn. After the Stonewall event, the gay political mantra was “out of the closets and into the street.”²⁸ This slogan registers a turn to avowedly public action by and identity expression for queer populations. Such publicness could easily be perceived as unnerving at best and threatening at worst. Scott-Heron implicitly registers this historical move toward politicizing publicness as a strategy

and what such queer public presence might mean for his Black masculine sexual identity: anxiety. The queer body is seen as threatening because of its potential to transform the meaning of the space it occupies. The speaker realizes that the party in the adjacent hall is a queer party because of the men he sees waiting in line. The speaker's concluding expression of uncertainty has to do with how he might be transformed. He also cannot take his eyes or attention off these men; he is surveilling them and obsessed with them and what they represent. Although his dismissive ideas about and language for the men are disparaging, he obliquely references the potential of queer intimacy to impact our perception of a place or even a person.

How might this piece be relevant to the idea of urban mapping? On the most basic level, the song-poem is framed by a reference to a specific intersection in Manhattan, about ninety blocks south and a few avenues west of the titular corner in Harlem. We follow Black bodies to different coordinates with this musical addition. In the process of doing his urban mapping, Scott-Heron finds that he must also document the presence and meaning of Black queer bodies. My point is not to ignore or undermine the homophobia that provides a foundation for his cultural production. The point is that the presence of the titular "faggots," these men seeking nonnormative affective and physical connections, threatens to unhinge or change the meaning of the urban space that Scott-Heron maps. There is a disturbance within the spatial recognition itself, which must be noted and documented. The focus is no longer on the party the speaker traveled ninety blocks to attend. The subject is faggots. The language he uses and disseminates through the production of the album is harmful and encourages homophobic reactions; it enacts discursive violence upon queer men. The piece is a reminder about how common homophobic content circulates within popular culture. However, part of what the song-poem inadvertently recognizes is the ability of queer bodies to redetermine and reorient the meaning of public space—again, the straight party virtually disappears from the account. Scott-Heron might not be a queer theorist, but his speaker's ostensible homophobia and genuine interest in the men at the corner of Thirty-Fourth and Eighth reveal recurring ideas about queer embodiment and the figuring of public space in poetry, photography, and song. Through these moves he helps to set up projects by other artists who would take up the question of queer sexuality in an extended manner and do so from an empathetic perspective. The song-poem stages a spatial conflict between the two adjacent parties that results in both negative expressions and the suggestion of meaningful connection and possibilities of intimacy. The inflammatory language is meant to dismiss the queer men and deny them the right to space because of the anxiety of proximity. The uncertainty

of what would have happened had the speaker gone in the wrong door suggests the possibility of not only violence and conflict but also pleasure and joyful abandon. The musical text plots out the kind of attitude that puts queer men at risk and recognizes the possibility of contact and intimacy to effect alternative paths and awaken new—nearly unthinkable—understandings of the self and the social world.²⁹

Although work such as Scott-Heron's exemplifies the concept of documentary poetics and poetic mapping in the post-civil rights context, I concentrate on Clarke's poetry collection *Living as a Lesbian* (1986) because it is explicitly interested in the urban mapping of conflict that comes to define this strain of documentary poetics and because it uses the Black lesbian body as its mechanism for documenting the public.³⁰ The question of sexuality is basically absent from Scott-Heron's poetry collection, but it does appear briefly on the album. However, sexuality becomes a primary lens of analysis in Clarke's text. Scott-Heron's considerations of spatial conflict and the inchoate suggestion of the power of queer intimacy or contact become the subjects of *Living as a Lesbian*. Scott-Heron's narrative configures Black space over and against queer space, even though the two are in such proximity as to invite transgression, and ultimately offers a spatial dilemma that Clarke addresses.

Clarke's work shows how racialization and sexual formation impact the set of relations that constitute public space. Clarke was born in Washington, DC, in 1947. She is a poet, educator, and essayist who has been engaged in activism since the early 1970s. She is the author of five volumes of poetry and an important book of criticism on Black Arts literature. Throughout her adult life she was very involved in feminist organizations and had a hand in the production of the classic texts *This Bridge Called My Back* (1982) and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1984). *Living as a Lesbian* is her most important collection. Although the title makes it seem as though the text is only about queer female life, the collection of poems can be read as a book of social commentary on post-civil rights public life and Black identity, in general. These poems demonstrate how the Black lesbian body and Black lesbian social location make evident anxieties about legislative change and the experience of public space. The collection is a rumination on this idea and on spatialized violence. "Living as a lesbian" means recognizing these dynamics, thereby situating Black queerness as especially valuable to social analysis.

Questions of place and movement emerge on almost every page of Clarke's 1986 collection. The volume contains confessional poems aimed at illuminating the quotidian experience of Black lesbian life. As poems such as "Sexual Preference" and "Intimacy No Luxury Here" demonstrate, Clarke uses the subject position of the Black lesbian as a lens for examining topics that vary

from familial relationships and the need for community to revolutionary politics and imaginable possibilities for sexual intercourse. The opening poem, “14th Street Was Guttred in 1968,” details how the social upheaval of the 1960s, particularly, the aftermath of the Newark uprising, impacted the speaker’s understanding of social space. One portion of Fourteenth Street is slightly east of the Fourth Precinct police station that had been the site of the standoff between the police and the protesting population in 1967. (Clarke lived much of her adult life in New Jersey and has maintained an interest in the history and politics of the urban spaces in the state.) The reference to 1968 in the title is important for two reasons. First, it provides a loaded allusion to the social upheaval following Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, specifically, as well as the uprisings, in general, that gave shape to the 1960s, including the one in Newark, which resulted from redlining, police abuse, un- and underemployment, and a general feeling of Black disenfranchisement. This year is also important because it situates the reader in a historical moment in which both the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act are in effect. The poem begins by describing how the streets of the city were “guttred” by fire (11). The speaker insists that these fires—which have both a literal and figurative meaning—“cauterize” her sense of place (11). This image of her being cauterized indicates her identification with this urban landscape—she, like the urban terrain, has been burned, but it also suggests that the speaker’s sense of place is secured and made possible from the social upheaval. The conflagration reimagined here represents and results from street-level struggles. The collection opens by making a correlation among the body, social space, and the violent remapping of that space.

One of the longest and most significant selections in the collection is “Urban Gothic.” It is a sequence poem that continues to explore the kind of lived dystopia envisioned in the opening piece and other poems in the collection. The poem follows a group of activists to an arraignment for one of their colleagues who has been arrested after what the speaker calls some “freedom action.” The speaker offers an accounting of the experience as well as descriptions of the landscape and people that occupy the city. There is a guided tour of the urban area: the courthouse is described as laying

cross the street from the projects—
concrete camp where 246 people of color
spend their confinement contained.

The poem offers a mapping of the city alongside such assessments of social inequality (15). Her poetry collection functions like Scott-Heron’s through its attempt to document urban space and social conflict. In addition to the

accounting of the city, the poem contains three monologic extracts: one from a man on the street, one from the speaker's friend at the jailhouse, and one from the presiding judge at the arraignment. All of the voices in the poem make clear how US minority populations are susceptible to manipulation and surveillance while in public. The primary speaker describes the situation in these terms:

Dissidents, misfits, malcontents, and marginals
serving out sentences on the streets of
America
spread-eagled against walls and over car hoods. (16)

The reader gets the sense that the community members experience heavy amounts of police surveillance and abuse because of the suggestions of being searched and arrested in the final line. This passage registers a metaphorical sense of social constriction, in general, as well as an overwhelming sense of disaffection. Because this disaffected population is described as serving "sentences on the streets," the selection also reflects a specific sentiment of spatial conflation: a jail cell and the public realm are indistinguishable from the perspective or experience of this population. This understanding resembles Baldwin's conception of the street as an orphanage; for both, public space is figured as enclosed and restraining for Black populations. Public space is one of imprisonment in terms of experiential reality; it appears as a "carceral geography."³¹ Movement and freedom are drastically restricted. The idea that the space of the public is always-already a carceral domain (the projects are presented as a confining "concrete camp") indicates the real challenges that one would have in producing or altering the meaning of that space. The speaker follows this description with the assertion that people are living "like rats in a maze" (16). The maze image compounds the understanding that meaning is being imposed on space and one's body. Rats in a maze are put there by someone (a researcher), and their movements are observed and documented; they are also often forced to compete. This scientific metaphor conveys ideas about surveillance, manipulation, manufactured conflict, and impaired agency. Clarke uses these ideas to describe the experience of those 246 people living in the concrete camp. Instead of bodies producing meaning here, the body makes one legible and then vulnerable in a labyrinth of imposed violence and value. Restricted movement and manipulation signify the extensive control of certain bodies.

In seeking to counter an understanding of the marginalized experience of space, the poem in its fourth section also provides insight on the judicial

regulation of space. In describing the dealings at the courthouse, the speaker insists,

The gavel refines the whip but not its intent. And
that niggers still have no rights white men are bound to respect
is still the code. (18)

Clarke's language here about the lack of rights for Black citizens is taken nearly directly from Chief Justice Roger Taney's opinion in the case *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857). Taney declares that Black people "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."³² The social implications of this decision, which upheld enslavement and denied Black people full citizenship rights, haunt the urban streets Clarke documents and are made manifest in the different forms of violence Black individuals still endure because of race-based discrimination. She seamlessly weaves the historical decision into the poem to make the point about the connections between the past and the present. The metonymic reference to the gavel describes the immediate imagined court scene of the poem, yet it also evokes the legislative and judicial acts that constitute the realm of civil rights, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although this act is a piece of legislation, much of civil rights advancement has been the result of the gavel: court cases. Clarke's speaker makes the point that such court cases and laws have transmogrified the social system that constituted enslavement (the "intent") instead of completely eviscerating them. The speaker concludes that African Americans have few inalienable rights in the civic realm. The statement is expressed in the historical wake of the omnibus Civil Rights Act. The "rights" of access that the act secures continue to be all but nonexistent. The minoritarian experience indicates the limitations of legislation to reproduce effectively public space and grant freedom of civic movement.

Such limitations might encourage one to conclude that the legislation fails. Rather than thinking in those terms, one might consider how legislation creates the opportunity to realize social change and may not be actual change itself. Legislation is a path and not a destination. Spatial methodologies can be used to apply pressure to the implications of the *post* in the term *post-civil rights era* by illuminating the limits of legislation. Regardless of arguments about how the official ending of Jim and Jane Crow drastically changed African American life and cultural work, there is not necessarily a decisive shift in experiential reality for African Americans after the passage of significant legislation as this statement from an article on the 1964 act from the *Chicago Defender* makes clear:

The wholesale jailing of civil rights demonstrators in Selma, Alabama, highlights a major weakness in the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It is evident that the act does not provide the necessary safeguards against manufacturing impediments to vote. [. . .] No doubt the framers of the new Civil Rights Act had given some thought to the handicaps that might be erected against potential Negro voters in the Southern states. There is always the notion that too strong a wording of the voting section of the act might sharpen hostility and gain converts on the side of the opposition. [. . .] It is obvious now, in the light of events in Alabama [the extreme violence against the Selma voting-rights campaign and the arrests of local sharecroppers and students trying to register to vote] that the voting section of the 1964 Civil Rights Act is not adequate to remove the road blocks thrown across its path.³³

The idea of the inadequacy of the act looms large in this article from an important African American newspaper. The civil rights project of reproducing social space emerges as one that is always incomplete and unrealized. This incompleteness results not simply from the temporal slowness of social change or because the legislation itself is always undercut, as Derrick Bell explains,³⁴ but also because of the real challenges to re-creating social space. Structural and material challenges linger after the passage of legislation. Part of what *living* as a lesbian means is negotiating such challenges, many of which have to do with movement through space.

Returning to “Urban Gothic,” it is important to consider the question of poetic structure. Clarke’s poem is quite fragmented; it is broken up into four enumerated sections, and the insertion of monologues by different personas results in regular perspectival shifts. What is the significance of this type of structure and the use of the extracts? On one hand, this technique allows Clarke to capture multiple voices and represent through language the notion of bodies in conflict similar to Scott-Heron’s poem. The reader hears from the arrested activist, who has been beaten nearly to death, whose “head [is] swaddled like a mummy”—meaning as if already dead—and is charged with assault, as well as the arraigning judge, who callously arrests a young mother for talking in his courtroom (17). Focus in the poem shifts between and among a number of frames of reference through the extracts. Injustice and state-sponsored abuse become apparent through the sections of the poem. On the other hand, through this poem composed of monologic extracts, Clarke presents the idea of the poet as social recorder or documentarian. Each section of the poem contains a veritable transcription of different individuals encountered on the journey from the street to the courthouse. This technique symbolizes an ethnographic impulse (the next chapter explores further the relationship between ethnography and literary production). The

ideas of ethnography and social documentation demonstrate how the poem gestures toward the kind of work done by the governor's report after the 1967 uprising: collecting voices and experiences. Many interviews were completed in crafting the report, and multiple perspectives come together to create the 204-page document that represents social conflict and suggests that there is more to come. The poem (or the collection as a whole) is not merely an artistic response to the report. Clarke develops a project that parallels the work taken up by legislators and Newark citizens in detailing the story of the urban conflict through mappings and multiple voices. Clarke's poetry reminds the reader of the risks that Black individuals and queer persons face in the public realm. She documents in her experimental poetry the social threats from private citizens and governmental officials that define the contours of the experience of urban space. Clarke presents the social world as a space of near-constant contestation and positions racialized conflict and ongoing discrimination as the defining realities of the social realm of the post-civil rights era. In the process of documenting Black life on the page and the stage, Scott-Heron indicates how Black queer bodies are seen as threatening even by other Black people. Clarke's poetry outlines how these threatening bodies exist in a near-constant state of risk, and her emphasis on multiple perspectives serves as a reminder that perils come from many directions. Her poetic strategies re-create textually spatial conflict that accompanies the expression of queer desire. To live and desire as a Black lesbian means coming to terms with and finding a way to negotiate this contested terrain made manifest in her poetry.

The world of Clarke's poem "Urban Gothic" is one in which its inhabitants are "confined to circles of apathy, anger, fear" (18). Social restriction and narrow-minded attitudes create a sense of confinement that results in feelings of dejection and collective unease. Being encircled by these negative sentiments generates a sense of the macabre and the violent throughout the community, which is why Clarke turns to the word *gothic* to characterize the frightening and death-dealing urban landscape she records. Being caught in this net of destructive significations and being made subject to material abuses ultimately encourage dissatisfaction and a desire for alternative space that will enable a different affective and physical relationship to the surrounding world. Ostensibly, one would like to remove the self from this hellish world. Philippopoulos explains that spatial justice "unfolds through withdrawal. [. . .] [W]ithdrawal is not a moral indictment, nor does it refer to withdrawing from the claim of the other body to occupy the same space at the same time. Withdrawal is not yielding to the other body. [. . .] *Spatial justice emerges when a withdrawing body passes into a differently oriented*

space in which the register of conflict might change" (198; original emphasis). Withdrawal is an elemental component of spatial justice. It describes a refusal of dynamics of social limitation and a claim for occupancy and mobility. One refuses (or withdraws from) social conventions and beliefs that encourage inequality and violence; one purposefully inhabits space to help alter its meaning. Withdrawal is about claiming space and redefining it through a process of ideological refusal and rejection.

Clarke's work takes the ideas that undergird withdrawal and refines the concept, clarifying it and using it as the basis for queer world-making. The concept of withdrawal is valuable, but the language itself is a bit misleading; even with the clarification, it is difficult to get beyond the imagery of retreat. Clarke's poetry calls for the kind of withdrawal Philippopoulos envisions, but she adds texture to it by connecting the idea of insisting on a right to space with an active assessment of historical inequalities and conflicts. The demand for spatial freedom in her work appears as more of a claiming and historicizing of space than a withdrawal from problematic modes of thought. The claiming of space involves insisting on a right to inhabit and move through the social world freely; historicizing space entails making connections across time that reveal patterns of spatialized discrimination as well as how multiple meanings prevail in the same space. Given these ideas, I describe Clarke's work as moving from a conceptual withdrawal to an act of historicized claiming. In staging a move from withdrawal to claiming and historicizing, Clarke accentuates three primary ways minorities contend with spatial inequality: refusing dominant ways of thinking about and organizing the world; engaging histories of discrimination and how they impact the meaning and construction of space; and insisting on a right to space on the same terms as majoritarian populations. The first point aligns her with how Philippopoulos develops spatial justice through withdrawal. However, the other two elements make legible a specific theorization of space that I connect to Black queer artists. Engaging histories of discrimination is not simply about dwelling on the past; it involves connecting the past to the present in a way that allows one to envision new possibilities beyond the known world.

Philippopoulos suggests that one may be able to move beyond and transform conflict by delving more deeply into it (41), but Clarke makes this task the core of her social analysis as she models in her poems the idea of historicizing as a route to spatial justice. The speaker's appraisal of the situation of judicial abuse in "Urban Gothic" reproduces the voice of Justice Taney in his 1857 statement; the judge in the courtroom is connected to the US Supreme Court Justice. A history to and a context for the public injustice are documented in the poem. The treatment of the activists and

attitude toward Black individuals in the space of the court is eerily similar to the social and political situation of one hundred years before: effective rightlessness and spatial restriction. The conflation of street and prison in the poem suggests how Black space is made a carceral geography because of the kind of thinking elemental to Taney's destructive and influential decision. Clarke's work asks that we divest ourselves from discriminatory ways of thinking and repudiate moves that ignore or erase the impact of the past on the treatment of bodies in the present. The simultaneous claiming and historicizing of space characterizes how artists negotiate the fraught terrain of the social struggles by contesting spatial meanings that circulate around the Black body. The language of claiming offers a visual image of a body occupying space willfully without yielding complacently to the will of another. The poetry next discussed shows how such claiming also represents a move toward a reconstituted social world in which one's place and mobility are not based upon one's social status as determined by legacies of enslavement and anxieties around sexuality.

Parker's poetry leans into the ideas of claiming and historicizing space while further illustrating the poetic desire for spatial justice. Parker was born in 1944 and grew up in Houston, Texas, before moving to Los Angeles, California, in the early 1960s. Around this time, she married Black Arts dramatist Ed Bullins, but the two later separated. By the end of the 1960s, Parker had begun to identify as a lesbian. She was involved with the Black Panthers and founded the Black Women's Revolutionary Council in 1980. She also actively sought out collaborative projects with women's organizations. Parker published five books of poetry before succumbing to breast cancer in 1989.³⁵ Overall, critics note her interest in feminism, a woman-centered sense of sociality, an overriding critique of racism and homophobia, and Black history.³⁶

Virtually no critical attention has been given to the fact that her work is marked by a spatial consciousness. This consciousness develops out of her response to three murders that haunt her poetic output: the mysterious death of her uncle in prison, the murder of a gay youth in Houston, and the shooting of her sister Shirley by her ex-husband. Specifically, the murder of women and the abuse of queer people show up as recurring themes in her poetry.³⁷ The collection *Womanslaughter* (1978), which focuses on her sister's violent death, is the clearest example of this theme. These tragic events, especially the murder of the young boy, become the basis for a spatial analysis throughout her work: "As a child in Texas, our newspaper boy was a faggot and he was killed by other kids in the community. They beat him up one night and threw him in front of a car. And everybody shook their heads and said how sad it

was, but before then everybody had talked about how strange he was. So those kids were able to get away with killing him because the community just felt that it was sad, but he was a faggot, right?" (16). Because Parker was around this boy's age, she cannot help but identify with him. Early on, she learns a lesson about the precarity of queer life. Queer individuals are deemed to be dispensable, and they face injury even from their communities. Unlike the death of Parker's uncle or sister, this young, queer child faced a particularly public death in part because he was perceived as being socially different. Perceptions, or how one's body gets read socially, can result in violence, particularly, for those seen as different or nonconforming. Parker carried with her the recognition of the vulnerability of the Black queer body—especially in public spaces—and this idea would inform her work. Parker is sensitive to the spatial vulnerability of women and sexual minorities, and she asserts a right to space for these groups. It is this twinned concern that dominates her poetic output. Her work is an ongoing meditation on spatial justice, the ability to have access to and move freely through the social world.

The idea of the threat of injury dominates two poems, in particular, "The Law" and "Boots Are Being Polished." The first appears toward the end of *Womanslaughter*. It questions the notion of respecting the law when legal instruments and institutions often do damage to defenseless populations. The poem intimates that there is no place safe from the injurious influence of the law's presence:

the law
comes to homes
& takes the poor
for traffic tickets. (145)

A mere traffic ticket could lead to police presence in domestic space and perhaps much worse, reflecting the idea of the near-absolute vulnerability of the populations upon which she wants to shed light. A felony and a minor traffic violation are almost indistinguishable from the perspective of the law when one is marginalized. Just as there is very little distinction between the street and the prison for Clarke in "Urban Gothic," the street is defined by surveillance and arrests in Parker's poem. Parker goes further by suggesting that the law can even trespass the space of the domestic so that there is no getting away from the law's grasp.

This idea of the inescapability of the law lies at the heart of the kaleidoscopic "Boots Are Being Polished," also published as "Where Will You Be?" The poem first appeared in Parker's collection *Movement in Black* in 1978

and later in the important special issue of *Conditions*, which focuses on the Black woman, a year later. When it originally appears in the poetry collection, Parker sets the poem in a section of the collection called “Liberation Fronts,” which explores the revolutionary sentiment and anticonservative social critique that became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. The section as a whole addresses issues of anti-Black racism and challenges to liberal thought and consciousness-raising. The poem prompts readers to consider if and how they will respond to threats against minority populations and suggests our collective complicity in social abuses. The basic conceit of the poem is that we often ignore the plight of the oppressed and, worse, are often complicit in that oppression; even though we might face the same danger. The refrain “where will you be” is meant to indicate that the threat is coming and inevitable. The poem is an extended meditation on coming threat:

I must make assessment
 Look to you and ask:
 Where will you be
 when they come?
 They will not come
 a mob rolling
 through the streets
 but quickly and quietly
 move into our homes
 and remove the evil
 the queerness
 the faggotry
 the perverseness
 from their midst. (82–83)

Two primary moves occur in this poem. The first is the inquiry (“where will you be?”) that suggests that there is no place where we can be protected from the reach of juridical power. Much of the first part of the poem details how an ominous “they” will come and threaten everyone’s lives. Any movement through the social realm is a movement away from or treacherous navigation of this omnipresent threat. The poem outlines an inevitable and destructive invasion of privacy and indicates that privacy and domestic space are unstable concepts and not guaranteed, especially for minority populations. The threat of the public makes its way into private spaces; there is no getting away from the danger of the public.

The second component of the poem is an indictment of our collective failure to protect others. The speaker insists,

Every time we watched
 a queer hassled in the
 streets and said nothing—
 It was an act of perversion. (83)

Clarke uses the language of “perversion” to describe sexual nonconformity and to characterize our lack of sympathy for other queers. We ignore the spatial restrictions placed on others’ bodies and, perhaps, even our own. It is this failure to recognize and care for fellow queers, those bound by potential injury, that constitutes our perversity. We are perverse because we refuse to recognize and act on our connection to our peers. Parker’s audience and readers were often queer people, which is why she relies upon “you” and “we.”³⁸ There is a shared identity between the reader or listener and the “hassled” queer the speaker references. The perversion in the poem results from a failed sense of kinship. The kinship here is not precisely the racial kinship that dominates much of the nationalist and revolutionary thinking of the 1960s and 1970s. Parker imagines the kinship of queerness in the poem and uses it as a tool to motivate and galvanize the community in the presence of the threatening nature of the public.

Parker’s sense of public danger resonates with nationalist critique that dominated Black social discourse during the historical moment that shaped her writing, but it does so from a queer angle. The logic the Black Panthers used to incite activism was that involvement was a duty that men had to their families to protect them from the social world. The *Black Panthers Speak* newspaper in its first edition, April 25, 1967, in Oakland, California, states the moral obligation to family functions as a motivating force for mobilization: “The white cop is the instrument sent into our community by the Power Structure to keep Black people quiet and under control. [. . .] BLACK MEN!!! It is your duty to your women and children, to your mothers and sisters, to investigate the program of the PARTY. There is no other way. We have tried everything else. *This is the moment in history when Black People have no choice but to move and move rapidly to gain their freedom, justice, and all the other ingredients of civilized living that have been denied to us*” (12; emphasis added). The response to the ongoing problem of racism is movement (“move and move rapidly”). The call to active movement is about one’s literal family, but as the references to “your women” and “mothers” intimates, it is also about protecting the figurative racial family. A plea to recognize racial kinship and the need to safeguard it appear vividly here. The writer relies on the framework of kinship to critique the state and demand action. Parker transforms this call from a heteronormative, patriarchal one to a “perverse”

one. It is not merely heterosexual Black “brothers” who are being addressed but, instead, gays and lesbians of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. There is a rejection of heteronormativity and patriarchy. The poetic plea is not about the literal family; it is about kinship that exceeds racial boundaries—her audience would have been multiracial. Parker recognizes the invasive nature of state power and the way in which minority communities can be in peril, but it is not solely a racial understanding that founds the animating kinship. In her thinking, movement is central to undoing oppression, but this oppression is not only racial in its character. In her mind, threat is multivalent.

To some extent, “Boots Are Being Polished” is an artistic extension of Black Panther leader Huey Newton’s 1970 letter about women’s liberation and gay liberation, in which he insists,

Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion. [. . .] We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people. [. . .] [W]e must relate to the homosexual movement because it’s a real thing. And I know through reading and through life experience, my observations, that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. Maybe they might be the most oppressed people in the society.³⁹

Newton’s statement, made one year after Stonewall, within months of Scott-Heron’s release of “The Subject Was Faggots,” and the same month Newton was released from prison, makes the unorthodox step of suggesting the importance of Black radical organizations and collectives aligning and finding kinship with other movements, particularly, those not based solely upon racial identity. Newton recognizes that homosexual activists and Black activists might have a common purpose or political goal—it is also an important step in political discourse toward the public acknowledgment of the subjects who identify with both groups. This move builds upon Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton’s recognition of the importance of coalition building in their highly influential social treatise *Black Power*.⁴⁰ One might go so far as to say that Black Power activists might need queer activists, or, at least, they do need to think about sexuality as part of the project of social radicalism. This idea intimated in the letter is made explicit in Parker’s poem eight years later. It is not just that Black revolutionaries can unite with homosexual revolutionaries; Parker situates queerness at the heart of radical activism, including nationalist organizing. She connects her thinking to other radical

thinking of the time, but she advances a queer sensibility and makes explicit the calls for mobility that is implicit in their arguments. This queer sensibility makes clear how anti-Black discrimination and homophobic discrimination work along spatial lines and that recognizing and questioning the constraints on movement through the social world are elemental to both artistic and activist projects at the time period.

Parker does not simply point out the reality of spatial constriction. Through connecting to the past, she argues for new social space that is free of constraint and that achieves the goals of spatial justice, shedding light on spatial conflict and asserting a right to access the public realm. The 1973 poem “I Have a Dream” exemplifies this poetic call for new social space and a different register for resolving conflict.⁴¹ The poem plays on King’s famous 1963 march on Washington speech. It builds on the iconic rhetoric of this speech and incorporates the “dreams” of other activists, such as Malcolm X, Angela Davis, and George Jackson. The speaker creates a radical genealogy and situates herself in it. The nature of this dream is one of movement:

In my dream
 i can walk the streets
 holding hands with my lover . . .
 i can go to a public bathroom
 & not be shrieked at by ladies
 in my dream
 i can walk ghetto streets
 & not be beaten up by my brothers. (90)

Political activism and the reproduction of the public realm appear as dreaming. The Black freedom movement in the post-civil rights moment for Parker’s speaker is about mobility. Literal movement should be the focal point of activism in the speaker’s mind. The acts of getting food, going to the bathroom, and simply walking down the street are challenges in the current world but not in the one that is imagined. That which causes the speaker’s distress and negative interactions is not only public displays of same-sex affection but also nonnormative gender expressions. The ladies in the bathroom “shriek” at the speaker likely because she is “butch,” meaning that her gender expression aligns more with traditional masculinity, so she is perceived as not belonging in a women’s restroom. Her sexual desire *and* her gender expression endanger her. For the Black queer speaker in the poem, this negative reaction as she enters the bathroom is tantamount to being denied entrance; the shriek works as a symbolic act of interruption that impedes movement. The speaker’s experience has layered behind it the

long history of racial segregation that includes the denial of access to public facilities, such as bathrooms, an important element of the social restrictions against which King and other activists set their “dreams.” The denial of access to public spaces is not new for Black people, and Parker taps into that history as she imagines what is an all-too-familiar scene of the interruption of Black queer movement. The existing Black freedom dreams may not account fully for these vectors of immobility. The speaker evokes these previously stated dreams of other activists but finds that she must also point to other possibilities. She does not want to yield to an unsatisfying method of social redress. The world she imagines is one defined by freedom of movement and proprietary access to the social realm. She is making a claim for spatial justice. The language of “dreams” becomes a rhetoric for demanding social change and a new social order, a new register for conflict.

Parker hearkens back to King, whose speech was given before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, thus, presumably, she evokes a moment before historical legislative change, a moment with a different historical meaning because she lives and writes in the post-civil rights era. However, the civil rights era and the speaker’s own time are disturbingly similar in that both appear to be filled with “unfulfilled promises,” to return to Rustin’s language. Parker adds to this conception of unfulfilled civic promises ideas about sexuality and the specific kinds of spatial constraints put on the Black queer body. Her turn to the past undermines the idea of progression deriving from legislative change. Her engagement of what is commonly understood to be a different kind of historical moment, the period before civil rights were realized, works as a strategy for contextualizing and claiming a right to move while also suggesting that a different conception of the public world is still possible. Engaging histories of discrimination is not simply about dwelling on the past; it involves connecting the past to the present in a way that allows one to imagine space otherwise.

This claim of movement that defines the dream in “I Have a Dream” becomes the basis for the 1978 poem “Movement in Black.” “I Have a Dream” is republished right before the “Movement” poem in the expanded edition of the collection *Movement in Black*, which assembles many of her previously published poems.⁴² Parker is best known for the “Movement” poem, which she often read accompanied by friends and women from the audience, who chanted the refrain, “movement in black.” The poem was first performed at the Oakland Auditorium in December 1977 by Alberta Jackson, Pat Parker, Vicki Randall, Linda Tillery, and Mary Watkins. Parker rarely performed this poem alone. Her presentation of the poem offered an opportunity for a collaborative woman-centered space; the performance of the poem enacted

feminist collaboration and inhabiting of (stage) space. According to Clarke, Parker was “lead voice and caller [when she performed the poem]. Black women from the community of her audience and those sharing the stage with Parker would be back-ups and response chorus.”⁴³ Her poetic production revolves around collectivity and connection. The intense repetition of lines and use of rhyming suggests the sense of aurality that she seeks to infuse onto the page in many of the poems. For example, the consistent use of anaphora can be thought of as a purposeful attempt to (re)capture sounds and ideas. These rhetorical techniques mark many of her poems and indicate her consciousness of her oral performances of the poems.

The poem opens,

Movement in Black
 Movement in Black
 Can't keep em back
 Movement in Black. (96)

These lines function as the refrain throughout the five sections of the poem that emphasizes the conceptual significance of movement. In the poem Parker offers a history of Black women's identity and labor, undoing the historic erasure of Black women's contributions. This historic account leads to an important “roll call,” in which she lists the names of Black women figures, such as Stagecoach Mary (Mary Fields), Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Fannie Lou Hamer, Marian Anderson, Barbara Jordan, and Audre Lorde.⁴⁴ Her goal is to speak “all the names we forgot to say / & all the names we didn't know / & all the names we don't know, yet” (100). Parker's motivation prefigures the twenty-first-century Say Her Name campaign, which raises awareness of Black female victims of violence. The movement that the poem tracks is a literal progression through history and a reference to the push for civil rights progress. The collection's title, *Movement in Black*, actively images the Black body in motion, which is helpful to pushing against ideas of racialized constraint. The insistence on movement is itself a claim to space in that it represents a demand for the right to move as one wishes. However, I also think that the title has another level of metaphoric meaning that relates further to my argument about how Black queer artists reconfigure spatial justice. The prepositional phrase *in black* that describes the agential movement may be read as referring to moving within and embracing African American history and the conflicts and achievements that constitute it. Parker calls for a conscious evoking of Black history, political ideologies, acts of community building, and ethical obligations—with the term *black* used as a metonym for this constellation of events and knowledges. To move “in black” intimates car-

rying such information along with oneself, figuratively wrapping oneself up in it. Movement “in black” as a tactic entails using this historical knowledge to make spatial discrimination legible and to develop tactics to create change. Knowledge of the past—shared through oral culture, newspapers, court records, and books—enables new understandings of the social world. As its references indicate, the poem’s movement in black reflects the idea of Black female historical survival within the social context of threat and disregard; a specific goal is to move in and through Black women’s history. The poem draws to its close by repeating the line, “I am a survivor.” Mobility becomes a metaphor and means for survival, and it is an investment in understanding the value of the past to the present that has aided in that survival.

Parker makes a claim for a new social realm and insists on surviving and doing so over time. This poetic declaration becomes a literary assertion of spatial justice. According to Philippopoulos, “desire for space generates spaces of desire. Each body wants to carry on being and becoming. *Spatial justice is the quest for a conative space, that is a space where an autopoietic, self-maintaining body can unfold.*”⁴⁵ The idea of carrying on the work of “being and becoming” summarizes the roll call in “Movement in Black” and the idea that the speaker carries forward the actions and ideals of these women. The assertion that spatial justice is a “quest” for conative space, or a space in which one can exercise one’s will to perform action, indicates that spatial justice also describes the development of the self and the right to control and regulate the self. These ideas bring to mind Black nationalist calls for local control of Black communities as well as the rise in Black-owned and -operated organizations during the late twentieth century. The lack of community control parallels the compromised individual physical and social mobility. US institutions and culture have historically sought to deny African Americans the right to control themselves. Segregation and spatial restriction are material emblems of this denial. Parker’s insistence on movement and survival is a demand for self-creation, self-control, and spatial justice. Because the notion of “movement in Black” in the poem appears as historiography, as physical movement on the street, and as continuing the self into the future, the piece is a poetic expression of Black autopoiesis, meaning Black self-creation. This assertion of self-creation and control is meant to counter the material and symbolic restrictions placed on the Black queer body and provide a language for describing a world free of such restrictions.

The poetry’s concern with self-making and perpetuation in relation to public space leads to my reading of Parker’s work as an artistic project concerned with the imaginative production of space through the imagery and structure of poetry. Her strategy moves away from the one that Scott-Heron

and Clarke demonstrate toward something different: from documenting the world to calling for a re-creation of the world in a way that is attentive to the minority body. Parker calls for a completion of the work proposed by acts of legislative redress, such as the Civil Rights Act, and points out their insufficiency. Moving in a different direction, Parker seeks to queer space, meaning to challenge normative presumptions and create room for other ways of thinking and being that contravene accepted ideas and customs instead of simply documenting them. The world that is (re)created in Parker's poetry is one rooted in the ethical obligations of collectivity and not one characterized by the neglect of vulnerable populations. Her active engagement of the audience in her reading of "Movement in Black" stages queer collaboration and community support. She creates a sonic and performative safe space, one that legislative change has still not been able to secure effectively. Community protection is the exact element missing from the life of the young boy who is murdered when Parker is a child. One can recognize how her heavy use of repetition not only creates memorable refrains but also suggests multiple voices, an idea made manifest onstage. Parker tracks a rhetorical movement toward ethical action and calls for a social world that encourages such action.

Claiming and historicizing space, "moving in black," become a means for reimagining spatial possibilities for the Black queer subject. Parker desires a different register for talking about Black freedom and an alternative spatio-temporal setting in which the streets are not violent or alienating. She seeks a setting that has a place for the Black queer body instead of having that body experience literal and figurative homelessness, as Baldwin describes. She never shows the reader that world; she keeps requesting it in her poems. The movement that she writes about over the course of her career is movement toward this new queered realm. She seeks to arrange and rearrange space and to position the Black queer body prominently in the social world. In using her poems to call for a queering of public space, she quests after the ability to control the construction of embodied placement. It is for this reason that *movement* dominates her thinking.

This desire for movement makes possible the exploration of queer desire that both Parker and Clarke take up in their respective poetic projects. The desire for space can create unconventional spaces rooted in desire; this circular idea presents a chiasmus, or rhetorical reversal, linking space and desire together, but it also helps to shed light specifically on the connections between queerness and space. The push against restriction creates the opportunity for imagining alternatives that question elements of normative thinking, which buttress restriction—including heteronormativity. From this perspective it becomes legible how queerness can emerge within the

desire for spatial justice. The queering of space entails acknowledging the inconsistent experiences of space because of social perceptions of different bodies and imagining a geography of social interaction governed by justice and parity for all bodies. The desire for spatial justice is not only a request for the reallocation of resources; it is a lyrical demand for a rethinking of space that is made possible by being mindful of social conflicts and their vexed histories and moving toward equity through that attention to inequality. The desire is for this new world.

The creative writing of Clarke and Parker demonstrates how spatial justice can become an analytic lens for assessing the site of interconnection among queerness, race, and ethics—pushing past the conceptual terrain laid out by Soja or even Philippopoulos. Because of this queer potential, it is within the work of Black queer artists, such as Clarke and Parker, that we can see certain strains of spatial justice realized most fully. Black queer desire often finds expression in terms of spatialized conflict, and the enactment of that desire offers a solid foundation for righting historic injustice, which has often been played out in violent encounters on the street and, as the next chapter shows, in crossing borders.

2. GEOGRAPHIES OF RISK

Migratory Subjects and the Uncertainty of Travel

I do believe my whole life is geography.

—Guitar, *Song of Solomon*

In Toni Morrison's epic novel *Song of Solomon*, the protagonist, Milkman, learns a lesson in "geography" from his itinerant best friend, Guitar. This compatriot makes a connection between agricultural work in India and Black labor in the United States and recognizes that geography identifies the complex connections people have to place and functions as a way to talk about history, politics, social relations, and even embodiment. Guitar concludes by insisting that "my whole life is geography," meaning that his identity is defined by a relationship to place.¹ Through this assertion, he offers an assessment of African American life and the dynamics that shape translational labor. Cultural critic Katherine McKittrick offers a way to make sense of this understanding of geography that encompasses Guitar's life and the experience of moving through the world in a Black body: territorialization. She contends, "In the most crude sense, the body is territorialized—it is publicly and financially claimed, owned, and controlled by an outside."² She points to a confusion of the land being worked with the bodies working the land, which circulates globally. The territorialization, this linking of the body with geography, also describes a destructive power relation: the encroachment of the public onto the personal, as the diction indicates ("claimed," "owned," "controlled"). It is about confining the body to certain meanings and geographies. The idea points to layers of threat that surround and bind Black embodiment. Territorialization is a geographic metaphor for such vulnerability, and in Guitar's mind, this metaphor describes social control and embodied injury that connects laborers across borders.

How does one undo territorialization? How might one redefine one's connection or relation to place? Movement, the refusal of situatedness, stands as one method for redefining one's relation to place, as the discussion in the previous chapter shows. Historically, (im)migration has been a way that people have sought to re-create themselves and form a new relationship to place. This chapter focuses on Black immigration and travel to trace out attempts to undo the more troubling aspects of territorialization; it explores the experiences of those who have learned Guitart's lesson but seek to unhinge mechanisms of social control. The chapter shows how territorialization may highlight the possibility of injury, but it also creates opportunities for undoing compromised agency. Building on Morrison's assertion and McKittrick's assessment, the chapter demonstrates how the movement of Black bodies across borders amplifies the territorialization most readily linked to enslavement, colonial labor, and their legacies, but the recognition of this danger leads to creative expressions of subjectivity through nonnormative desire.

In the Black diasporic imaginary, the migratory subject is often a figure without privacy or with compromised privacy.³ One finds that the claim that territorialization makes on the physical body extends to other terrain: the control of the body is linked to or paired with the denial of privacy. Feminist geographers have made the case that women's lives are the most spatially restricted even when they exercise their mobility.⁴ Literary artists and social scientists confirm and elaborate this idea in their consideration of Black women migrants. The migratory subject experiences movement as the negotiation of risk. Although movement through space and across borders elucidates the multiple ways minority bodies are made vulnerable, I argue that Black diasporic authors use representations of movement to redefine the relationship queer bodies have to place and to offer radical visions of (spatial) freedom.⁵

What is traced here is the way that immigration or movement across borders creates conditions of vulnerability and, specifically, the loss of privacy and control over one's body, by looking at ethnographies of Caribbean labor migrants and the fiction of Makeda Silvera, which develops out of this social scientific work. Her texts carefully sketch out how women's movement across borders gets characterized by the loss of privacy through scenes of invasion and acts of interruption. I am particularly interested in labor migrancy, which appears through the lens of risk in the Black diasporic imaginary. That risk revolves around the dissolution of privacy, which accompanies migratory mobility. Refusing to allow the framework of limitation to define totally the movement of the Black immigrant, the chapter explains how an unexpected embracing of movement's potential can paradoxically undo the threat of

injury created by crossing borders and moving through space. Turning to Dionne Brand's historical and fictional writing, the chapter illustrates how queer writers and thinkers claim the fugitive power of movement to escape state and private forces that seek to control them and imagine freedom otherwise. These thinkers reimagine geographies of risk and restriction as pathways of escape and flight.

In Black diasporic studies, when considering significant moments in Caribbean migration and citizenship, we often foreground the arrival of the HMT *Empire Windrush* at Tilbury Docks in Essex, England, in June 1948. Among the passengers were around five hundred individuals from Jamaica who came to fill employment shortages and to take advantage of their new access to British nationality. As the works of Kennetta Hammond Perry and Nadia Ellis illustrate,⁶ the *Windrush* arrival ushered in a transformation of the Caribbean imaginary and shifted the terrain of politics in the United Kingdom. It is an incredibly important moment in terms of social history and literary culture. However, the *Windrush* focus can prioritize the experiences of male migrants and can obscure other important moments in legal history that shape the course of Caribbean migration. The 1948 event also does little to illuminate migratory patterns from Caribbean islands to mainland American nations.

The Domestic Scheme, a major mid-twentieth-century Canadian immigration policy reform, sheds light on paths of movement from the colonies to North American metropolises. The scheme reveals the particular vulnerability of Black female labor migrants, specifically, the lack of privacy brought on by immigration, and it provides the context for later literary explorations of the difficulties of queer Caribbean life.

In 1955 the Canadian government altered its immigration policy to allow more permanent visitors from the Caribbean. Before 1955 very few Caribbean immigrants were allowed legally in the country; Canada greatly restricted non-White migration.⁷ Because individuals from Anglophone Caribbean islands were not yet official British citizens (until 1948), they could not move easily to Canada as a (former) British territory. The more restrictive practices were replaced by a slightly more welcoming one because of labor shortages. Canadians needed more domestic workers. Canadian officials first turned to Europe to help fill the gap, but they found themselves unable to recruit domestic workers from European countries. Then, the officials decided to turn to Caribbean nations for help and created what came to be known as the Domestic Scheme, which allowed the immigration of women domestic workers from Jamaica and Barbados (and later Trinidad and Guyana) for one year. These women laborers would have to work for one full year, and then

they would be granted landed status, which meant they had entered legally at a designated port, had been officially made a noncitizen permanent resident, and could then work in Canada without threat of deportation. Only a few years earlier, in 1947, the Canadian government with the Canadian Citizen Act of 1946 created for the first time Canadian citizenship that was separate from British nationality. The Domestic Scheme expanded immigration policies into Canada and provided a new path to Canadian citizenship.

This shift in policy promised a new kind of social and physical mobility for women workers and their families. The Jamaican newspaper the *Daily Gleaner* published several articles about and photographs of groups of Jamaican women excitedly preparing to board planes to Canada with government officials during the late 1950s. Local Caribbean governments worked hard to recruit and screen women for the positions and encouraged the women laborers to see themselves as representing their nations abroad. Unfortunately, the undergirding logic of the Domestic Scheme was not about helping those countries but about supplying exploited labor. These women were often “legally obliged to live in the households of their employers, a condition which [undermined] their civil liberties and [heightened] their vulnerability to every form of abuse. In every province where they worked, private household workers have access only to partial and unregulated employment standards.”⁸ Part of the complexity of the scheme is that it was designed and sponsored by the state, but the work took place in private residences. The domestic laborer was always subject to the laws regarding immigration as well as being subject to the caprices of the individual employer. The state had few oversights into the private homes, ensuring that the employer maintained a kind of protection from state intrusion even as the employer benefitted from state action. The state mandated minimums regarding pay, but many women reported they never received anything near these minimums;⁹ however, they could do nothing about it. Few protections were in place for the workers; to some extent their job was to ensure and protect the domestic space (the veritable privacy) of White Canadians through labor-intensive work. The state department’s decision to initiate the scheme represents an attempt to secure the stability of private, heterosexual domestic spaces, so one cannot easily keep distinct the boundaries of the state and the boundaries of these private spaces.

The discussions of Caribbean migration in popular media from the time period revolve around constraint: “The only black people freely admitted to Canada as landed immigrants are a limited number of women, who must accept the undignified classification of domestic servants, plus a few persons hand-picked by Canadian authorities because they have professions

or special skills needed by Canada. [. . .] Those who want to remain must apply for 'landed immigrant' status, which makes it legal for them to take a job."¹⁰ The state's employment plan created a condition of social vulnerability for the laborers. Bridget Anderson details how the "migrant" as a category is a creation of the state in that this figure is made legible through specific immigration controls and citizenship legislation.¹¹ Similarly, the domestic workers' vulnerability is a result of state action and inaction. Even when there is a promise of citizenship on down the line, one might still wonder about the experience of these women workers living in the homes of strangers, existing at the intersection of state control and private control.

Important scholarly work done on Canadian domestic workers during the 1960s helps to illuminate the limitations of the scheme and the alienation the women laborers experienced. Frances Henry, an anthropologist of German descent, initiated a quantitative pilot study of domestic workers who had immigrated through the scheme in 1965 with the help of a "West Indian nurse, with training in sociology."¹² Over the course of the study, Henry and her collaborator interviewed sixty-one women. A large percentage of the women in the sample had been in Canada for fewer than five years, and most were single. Henry uses the data to bear out the hypothesis that the difficulties these migrating women faced derive primarily from their inability to acculturate because of the demands and social perceptions of domestic labor. The essay is about socialization, but it also reveals a persistent disappointment with travel and an alienation that derives from this legislation-enabled mobility. One of the study questions inquired after the reason that the women participated in the scheme: Twenty-eight percent said, "To better myself"; 28 percent said, "Desire to travel"; 13 percent said, "Desire to get away from Home conditions"; and 15 percent said, "Simply wanted a change" (85). Henry goes on to insist, "Many had built up glorified expectations visualizing a country of great wealth, where work and life would be easier and where it would be simple to advance financially. They were unprepared for the working conditions in the home as domestics and in subsequent jobs where punctuality and hard work were expected. [. . .] Over half of the sample expressed disappointment in the Canadian people with whom they came in contact, finding them unfriendly, ignorant and prejudiced" (86). Henry's assessment offers data for feelings of alienation and disconnection. The study explains that many of the women actually experienced "downward social mobility" because they had strong academic credentials and work experience but were limited to domestic work for the first year in Canada. Also, a large amount of social stigma surrounded this labor. Henry's work attends to the "why" of immigration as well as to the challenges of being an immigrant, but it does little to sketch

out the actual experiences of domestic work—the difficulties that come from working and often living inside someone else's home. The focus is more on the social problems that result from the scheme than on the women's lives and the nature of the spaces they occupy when they immigrate.

Henry's socioquantitative research serves as an intellectual precursor to Silvera's 1983 ethnography of West Indian domestic workers in Canada. Silvera is best known as a queer Jamaican Canadian fiction writer, but she did graduate work in sociology and has been an activist for domestic workers' rights. Her book *Silenced* (1983) is based on her interviews with ten Caribbean domestic workers living in Canada. Silvera's text differs from the one published by Henry fifteen years before primarily in terms of methodology: Silvera chooses to foreground qualitative assessment over quantitative. The volume is a solid example of the genre that will later be called *feminist ethnography*.¹³ Feminist ethnography seeks to describe women's lives and to challenge accepted ways of knowing and talking about these lives through examinations of power and social hierarchy. As an example of such work, part of what *Silenced* records through its analysis is the movement from more positivist approaches (such as, survey interviews like the one Henry used) to critical or engaged ethnography, which emphasizes reflexive inquiry and considers the relationship between ethnographer and ethnographic subject. Feminist ethnography is both methodological—in terms of encouraging new approaches to ethnography—and epistemological—in challenging normative understandings of women and gender identity. Silvera's interviews represent a rejection of a more positivist approach to ethnography and a consideration of her own identity, voice, and her relationship to the women she interviews.

Silvera is especially interested in archiving the voices of the women and detailing the experience of being an immigrant domestic worker. Many important resonances suggest that very little has changed over time in the situations of these women laborers. Silvera opens her book by asserting that she found that many of the women with whom she talks held a "misconception of Canada as the land of milk and honey" or a space of unlimited social and economic possibility, reinforcing the thoughts that many women in Henry's study had.¹⁴ However, Silvera is quick to point out that the women in the late 1970s and early 1980s have a different social situation than those who migrated in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The women in the earlier period came on temporary employment visas, which were issued for a particular kind of job and for a specific time period. After that time period (and without any changes to employment status), the laborers were often automatically entitled to "landed immigrant status," which would grant them further rights and make them eligible for other kinds of employment.¹⁵ They became per-

manent residents of Canada. However, by the end of the 1970s, the number of immigrants with landed status had grown so much that the government decided to restrict the number of landed-status permits given to those with temporary work visas. The women in Silvera's study were given temporary employment visas, but no landed status was guaranteed or even foreseeable. This shift in policy derived from the further domestic-labor shortages. Women were willing to come over and work as domestics in Canada, but many transitioned to landed status and better jobs as quickly as they could. They served their year as a domestic and then left the job for better positions. This reality put Canadian society in the same position it had been in 1955: there was an insufficient number of domestic workers. Accordingly, policy makers decided to take away the guarantee of landed status. The blocking of landed status meant that many women remained stuck in a limbo of unending domestic work. The unavailability of landed status is a major focus through Silvera's conversations with the women as well as in the argumentative framing of the interviews. Through her work, one gains a better sense of the vagaries of female labor migration, particularly, in regard to gender and sexuality.

In *Silenced*, immigration occasions a loss of privacy for those who move across national borders, and this loss of privacy often appears as the restriction of movement. This kind of mobility undermines the possibility of any kind of privacy or self-autonomy. Political scientist Abigail Bakan and sociologist Daiva Stasiulis explain, "While most modern middle-class North American homes are not built with 'spatial deference' (such as separate servant's entrances and rooms) in mind, live-in domestics generally are expected to render themselves invisible through their spatial practices. [. . .] They are expected to respect the privacy of employers, while themselves being denied privacy."¹⁶ This sense of spatial denial is a recurring element in Silvera's ethnography of the women's statements about their lives. Julie, a twenty-year-old Black Antiguan woman, comments,

Well, when I came to Canada, I stayed with the lady and her husband for about eight months, but she wasn't very nice and she told me to leave because I wasn't good enough for her kids. When I went there in the beginning everything was fine, and they treated me o.k., but after a while I found out that I didn't have any real privacy and that really bothered me. One of the main things that happened why I had to leave was an incident involving my suitcase which someone in the house had broken into. The lady I worked with used to go into my suitcase and search my things. [. . .] I was burning [angry] because that [suitcase] was the only privacy I had.¹⁷

Julie's situation is a reminder that domestic jobs were often live-in situations and speaks to the possible ramifications of such a living situation. Julie goes on to explain that she had to share a room with her employers' six-year-old son. Sharing her room with the child literally restricts her movement and autonomy within the one space she might feel able to manage her time on her own terms. Her *locked* suitcase represented the only kind of privacy and separateness that she could have living in her employers' home. The "lady's" ferreting through the suitcase, as if she is a customs agent, is emblematic of how nothing can be kept from the employer; everything in the house is her property, and Julie is always subject to search. Her employer mimics the practices of the state. Privacy as a social concept is often tied up with ideas about a property ownership, as Phillip Brian Harper makes clear.¹⁸ The migrant laborer has few property rights—especially without landed status—thus no right to privacy. At a later moment in Silvera's collection, Savitri, a Guyanese woman, asserts that living in Canada means sacrificing any right to privacy (59). Having privacy does connect to ideas of movement because it implies that one has a proprietary space to move through at one's will, so those without privacy can be understood as also having constrained mobility. The overwhelming sentiment about the loss of privacy that recurs throughout the interviews reflects how these "landless" women lack full rights to property and how civic rights remain inaccessible for the migrant. This denial of the private accentuates feelings of seclusion and restriction; one has no place to go. Through this perspective, one understands how Silvera's work enriches Henry's. These migratory experiences are not only about cultural alienation and the difficulty of socialization; they are also about spatial encroachment and inconsistent access to (private) space.

This denial of privacy does not only emerge as the invasion of personal space; it also appears as sexual violation. Hyacinth is from St. Lucia and had only been living in Canada for a little more than a year when she spoke with Silvera. Her account emphasizes a nightmarish experience trying to earn a living:

I remember the first time I think something was funny was one night I was sleeping and I feel someone in my clothing, feeling up my private parts. This happen after I was here for a month. I jumped up because I was fright and when I look it was him, the man I was working for. I nearly scream out, but he hold my mouth and tell me to be quiet. [. . .] He ask me if I wasn't attracted to him, and I just look at him, I was really afraid to answer. I remember he kept pushing his finger down in my private parts and blowing hard. It really hurt and when I told him so, he ask me if I didn't give birth

to one baby already. He tried to push me down on the bed but I wouldn't let him, and he had his hand over my mouth so I couldn't scream. [. . .] I remember him telling me that if I had sex with him he would raise my pay. I tell him that I couldn't do that because he was married and his wife was upstairs. [. . .] He laugh and ask me what Black girls know about marriage. [. . .] The more I fight the more he seem to enjoy it, so after a while I just lie down quiet and let him finish. After he finish he jump off me, spit on the floor and tell me if I tell his wife or anybody he would see that they send me back to St. Lucia or that I go to jail. (64–65)

Hyacinth has no control over or access to her room or her body. Her employer positions sex initially as means to making more money but ultimately as the only way to maintain her employment and freedom. His probing finger is invasive and symbolizes the fragmentation of any sense of privacy she could have in her employer's home. This finger is also the prelude to more sexual violence. If his finger invades her body, her employer's person immobilizes her; she cannot fight or move. His actions, which force her to "lie down quiet," are acts of physical restraint. Sexual violence appears as an act of spatial confinement.¹⁹ There is a connection between the encroachment of privacy and spatial restriction. His spitting on the floor after the assault has at least two levels of meaning relevant to the presentation of Hyacinth's subjectivity: It casts her and the room she occupies as object, and it forcefully reminds her of her role as a domestic laborer because it will be her job to clean the sputum from the floor after he leaves. She must clean him (or traces of him) off of the floor and her body, objectifying her through analogy. In threatening to send her to jail or back to St. Lucia, he is claiming the power of the state to imprison or deport her. Chapter 3 explores incarceration and detention of Black queer individuals, but what is at issue here is how Hyacinth's boss assumes the power of the state as her state-supported, private employer.

The encounter perpetuates stereotypical assumptions about the promiscuity and sexual availability of Black women and women of color. This scenario is disturbingly similar to familiar ones from nineteenth-century narratives of enslavement in that what he says is not dissimilar from what a slave master might say to an enslaved woman. Silvera's oral history pushes against notions of racism being absent from or less pervasive within the Canadian imaginary, thereby resonating with important work of McKittrick, Rinaldo Walcott, and other scholars in Black Canadian studies who seek to complicate such ideas.²⁰ Through Silvera's work, we get a better sense of how labor migrancy is threatening. The belief is that the Domestic Scheme would offer to women possibilities and some control over their futures. The realities of the work and the Canadian government's decision to make much more dif-

ficult the access to landed status means that these women laborers often lose control over their futures and their bodies. The situation represents what Trinidadian activist and scholar Claudia Jones calls the “super-exploitation” of Black women’s labor.²¹ The Domestic Scheme and the everyday citizens that participated in it relied upon and perpetuated certain ways of thinking about minority labor.

The destruction of privacy and the creation of spatial confinement for Black subjects are the focus here. We are not dealing with the complexities of public space or being in the street, as in chapter 1. We are inside the home, but what we find is that for Black and minoritarian subjects, threats and power dynamics transgress the boundaries of domestic walls. For the minority body, being inside is not necessarily safe. The reason for this porousness has to do with the ways the state seeks to support and empower certain heterosexual domestic spaces. We can encounter social threats inside as well as outside, especially when we introduce power differentials embedded in labor dynamics and when employers invoke state power as their right. As the employer’s invasive finger reminds us, the outside can make its way into spaces that we thought were private.

In thinking about the fragmentation of migrant privacy, this discussion now turns to Silvera’s short-story collection *Her Head, a Village* (1994). I read these short stories as extensions of and formal meditations on the ethnographic work done a decade before. Through its formal presentation, the collection proposes the migratory experience as one constituted by serial transgressions of privacy and constraining actions against minority bodies. The short story is often thought of as an apprenticeship form. The thinking is that an author writes short stories in the process of mastering the “major” genre of the novel, making the short story a minor form. The field of short-story studies has applied pressure to this understanding to conceive of the short story as a stand-alone genre. There is a tendency to read this prose form as a genealogical development out of other literary forms, such as the folktale and the fairy tale, reflecting shifts in market pressures and patterns of consumption toward the brief.²² Literary critic Charles E. May describes it as “short literary prose fiction” that focuses on a single event and single effect (1). Silvera’s social scientific and artistic work pushes us to think differently about the purpose and function of the short story generically. I read her short stories as a series of translations of her sequence of oral histories. Rather than thinking about the form in relationship to other literary forms—whether the novel or the tale—she allows us to think about its relationship to nonliterary forms. We are encouraged to consider what the short story might mean outside of a purely literary context. I contend that the collection offers a fictional

rendering and rethinking of the oral-history form. In the process of creating the collection, Silvera proposes *ethnographic fiction*, or fiction that mirrors the structure of and takes on the role of ethnography. Seriality instead of singularity becomes the focus. *Her Head, a Village* is a transformation of a collection of interviews, showing how the short-story collection can have a specific relationship to other serial or sequential nonliterary forms. Silvera's short stories put even more attention on sexuality and point out the spatial precarity of the Black queer migrant.

Silvera does not simply turn the oral histories into fictional representations; the events the women detail become elements of the narratives but not always the central focus of the short stories. Two stories from *Her Head, a Village* illustrate this point: "Canada Sweet, Girl" and "Baby." The first story follows the experiences of the character Millie Maxwell, who traveled to Canada hoping for "a new life, opportunity, and fun" only to discover the travails of being a "landless" and "paperless" migrant (34). Maxwell finds that domestic labor, particularly, live-in work, is the only option for her and many of her women friends. Her roommate can only find work as a nanny, but she is quick to point out that such work is undesirable. The history of the Canadian Domestic Scheme is the backdrop for the story, although the central character does not participate. Maxwell stays in the country illegally; she has traveled there for a visit and does not leave. However, she is not able to keep away from domestic labor even without the official support of the Domestic Scheme. Maxwell's friend Punsie is a live-in nanny, and she makes plain the challenges of the work. Punsie's description of "living-in" shows that she has no privacy and is under the absolute control of her employers (41). Because of situations such as Punsie's, Maxwell avoids live-in roles, yet she is unable to avoid domestic work. The realities described in the oral histories of *Silenced* surround Maxwell, shape the construction of her character, and inform her perceptions of Canadian life for the Black woman immigrant. After having been frustrated with her working life there, Maxwell proclaims, "I work in dis land, never tief yet, never take welfare" (42). This statement is remarkably similar in syntax and sentiment to a comment made by one of Silvera's interlocutors in *Silenced*: "I feel that I have done my duty here. [. . .] I never get in any trouble here. [. . .] I never break one law in the country" (50).

Silvera does not place in the foreground a character who is always a domestic worker; her text shows how the specific experiences of domestic workers shed light on the lives of many Caribbean labor migrants. Maxwell's vulnerabilities in the narrative resonate with those discussed in the oral histories, particularly, in regard to privacy and labor-based control over women's bodies

and movements. Maxwell is able to find work as a cook and waitress in a West Indian restaurant, but she draws the sexual attention of her employer, Mr. Young. He suggestively offers her a way of “making extra money”; she refuses these advances at first but ultimately acquiesces when he offers to rent her a flat. She had been living with her friend Bev, and the situation had gotten a bit crowded since Bev’s boyfriend had also moved into the small apartment. The promise of money and *increased privacy* convinces Maxwell to accept his sexual advances. She is not a kept woman; she is still expected to work twelve hours a day, six days a week in Mr. Young’s restaurant, but she is able to save rent money. Their working relationship does not morph into a romantic one, and Maxwell does not fall in love with her boss. She insists, “Sometimes I vex di way he come all di time. But he paying di rent. He’s my boss. I work hard for my money” (39). She feels as if she has little choice if she wants to stay employed and housed. The promise of domestic privacy is a trick because Mr. Young comes over nearly every night. What he pays for is full access to her body whenever he wants it, just as Hyacinth’s employer believed that his wages to her afforded him access to her body. Maxwell’s home is really an extension of Mr. Young’s home (and restaurant). She has unwittingly become a live-in laborer metaphorically, and she experiences spatial confinement through denial of privacy. Silvera’s short story demonstrates how the live-in situation that many domestic workers face is a means for talking about the compromised situations of migrants, in general—whether or not they were literally live-in laborers. In both the oral history and the fictional telling, the labor relationship has sexual parameters for women.

The destruction of Maxwell’s privacy begun with Mr. Young’s desire is completed by the intrusion of immigration officials into her home. While she is enjoying her day off and “feeling sweet” about the life that she has created for herself, there is an unexplained knock at the door. It is the police. They claim that someone has complained about the noise level of her radio, but they immediately ask if she has landed status and insist on coming in:

“Can we see your passport, ma’am?” “What kind of work do you do?” All these questions coming at me. My hands dripping water now, but di same I say, “What that’s got to do with turning down my set, officers?” They don’t listen. They just walking into my apartment looking around like they paying my rent. (43–44)

The noise complaint that brings the officers to the door is a ruse; they are there to put her in custody. Once they are inside, they serve her papers that say she is being arrested for illegal entry into the country. The police enter the home freely, just as Mr. Young does. In effect, they are there because of Mr.

Young, as his wife is the probable informant—she has just recently realized that Maxwell's son is her husband's offspring. Maxwell's savings is drained by a useless lawyer as she is trying to defend herself in the court system. Ultimately, she is told that she will be deported, and she is uncertain what will happen to her son. The story ends with this sense of tragic uncertainty to emphasize the instability of migrant life, similar to Julie's account from *Silenced*, which also ends in deportation. Deportation—or even the threat of it, as in Julie's narrative—is a mechanism for managing immigrant populations and a tactic for interrupting and controlling movement; it serves this purpose in Silvera's story. However, part of the historical context of this representation of the possible deportation of this Jamaican woman character is the 1978 case of the Seven Jamaican Women, in which seven women domestic workers were ordered to be deported out of Canada for failing to supply information about having children—the policy stipulated that labor migrants should not have children.²³ Working with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the women were able to have the orders overturned. Even though the women are able to defeat the order, the case is a reminder of how the complexities of women's lives can be at odds with immigration and labor policies, as Erica Lawson explains.²⁴ Silvera ends her story with uncertainty to register that the conflict between the state and the migrant body is ongoing.

Silvera builds on this idea of the inability to have control over the movement of one's life in the final moments of the story by emphasizing the connection between Maxwell's body and the place she now calls home. After she has been told that she is to be deported back to Jamaica in twenty-four hours, Maxwell mindlessly walks the street: "Today is one of the coldest days since winter start. People running in all directions for shelter. [. . .] Mi nose running, and di snot turn to ice on mi face. [. . .] Dis coldness cyaan match di numbness in me" (48). This numbness reflects how her internal feeling of alienation and isolation metaphorically matches the wintery weather. There is a corporeal reaction to being made homeless and forced to endure weeks of this weather. Maxwell is sick, literally sick; she has not been able to maintain her health in this situation. She feels dejected, but her body is also reacting to infection. The story ends with a scene of sickness because sickness registers fatigue and lack of control (chapter 4 explores further the connection between illness and compromised agency). She is moving through the city aimlessly because she could not protect her son, her livelihood, or her body. The sickness has clear symbolic value, but it should also serve as a reminder of the intense climate change when moving from Jamaica to Canada, as well as the difficulty of having reliable access to medical care as an immigrant.

The “coldness” invades her body, mirroring the actions of her employer and the police, and leaves her without bodily integrity.

The unpredictability of the migrant experience and the dissolution of privacy also provide the foundation for the short story “Baby.” This brief narrative is not about domestic labor, but the concerns of the women in *Silenced* are nearly identical to those of the women in “Baby.” Silvera moves in different directions in this story, but she develops it out of the insights that she gleaned from her oral histories. The story contains two major elements: a bedroom conversation between two women lovers about their relationship and life in Canada, and the thoughts of a disturbed man who stands outside the couple’s bedroom door with a gun ready to violate and kill them. The central conflict between the two women, Asha and Baby, revolves around Asha’s desire to keep a low-profile, home-based life. What she values most about living in Canada, as opposed to their home country, Jamaica, is *privacy*: “Asha felt grateful for the privacy Canada had given them” (66). She fears that if people find out that she is a lesbian, her teaching job will be in danger, so she retreats into their apartment and lives most of her life with Baby behind closed doors. Baby, on the other hand, is frustrated by what she feels is hiding at home: “We go nowhere together, excepting the Hotspot Restaurant, which don’t count. We hardly have any friends. All we do is watch TV. It’s like I’m invisible in your life. [. . .] We can’t go on like this. I want out. Do you hear me? O-U-T. Out. Watch my mouth, I want to live like a normal person, not in a closet” (67). Baby feels hidden by this domestic existence. She accuses Asha of being so closeted that the two have no actual social life. Asha desires privacy for self-protection and believes that keeping their relationship at home will keep them both safe. Baby refuses to deny herself a public existence and feels she will be safe in public.

Unfortunately, both women are wrong. The man who has snuck in through their window and is preparing to hurt them demonstrates that their carefully constructed queer home space is not secure from invasion. This man took notice of them initially at the one public place in which both believed themselves to be safe: the Hotspot, a West Indian restaurant. When this unnamed man sees them, he overhears the conversation of other men:

“Bwoy dem girls different. Dem needs a good fuck. Can’t understand how nice Black woman like dem get influence in dis lesbian business.”

“Nastiness man, nastiness. Satan work.”

He’d overheard the last comment many times. He’d watched the two women closely each time they came into the Hotspot. They had an independent streak about them. He didn’t like it. They come to Canada and they adopt foreign ways, he thought to himself. [. . .]

Tonight he was going to put a stop to all this nastiness. He'd try to help them, and if they didn't listen, then they'd have to face the consequences.
(71)

Going to the restaurant, a place that reminded Asha and Baby of home, has actually endangered them. This public threat that the men represent has followed them home and transgressed any ostensible boundary between the social world and the domestic, the public and the private.

The reader soon discovers that this threat is explicitly a sexual one. As he is standing outside their door holding a gun, he decides that he will beat and rape them to let them feel the "real thing." This "real thing" has at least three levels of meaning in this context: his penis, authentic sexual intercourse as opposed to "inauthentic" lesbian intercourse, and authentic womanhood defined as orbiting around a man. Through this reference to the "real thing," Silvera alludes to a number of patriarchal, heterosexist ideologies that pinion queer women's identities. His presence registers the idea of the control of their autonomy. As he is preparing himself to exact the purifying punishment, he hears Asha and Baby begin to make love and becomes sexually stimulated. After masturbating, he orgasms, leaving traces of semen on the floor, and he loses his stamina for violence. The ejaculated semen serves a similar symbolic function as the spit Hyacinth's employer's leaves behind. In leaving a trace of himself on the carpet, the intruder claims intimate access to their home and, by extension, their bodies. He does leave at the end of the story without hurting them, but the threat remains. He can come back at any time. What is worse is that neither Asha nor Baby even knows he has been there—his semen stain on the carpet is mistaken for cat vomit. The two women do not know how fragile their privacy is or that the threat of violence exists in a space in which both characters believed they had personal freedom. The reader has no idea if or how long the women will be safe as the story draws to its close. Here, as in "Canada Sweet, Girl," it is with uncertainty that Silvera ends her story. It is not clear what will happen to the characters, but what is certain is that privacy for these subjects is tenuous. Silvera's strategy of aligning the narrative by turns with the women characters and with the male character creates a situation in which the reader has knowledge that the women do not. We know he was there, but the women characters remain unaware of how easily their home was invaded. This narrative structure shows the reader the extent of the women's near-defenselessness and indicates that one may not always be fully aware of the threat of injury even as it surrounds one.

Silvera draws an unexpected conceptual connection between the experiences of Jamaican domestic workers in Canada and those of Afro-Caribbean

lesbian migrants. If life was challenging for migrants in the heterosexual context, in many ways, problems are magnified in the homosexual one. Silvera unites the two groups through the motif of silence. She produces her oral histories to break the historiographic silence surrounding Caribbean domestic labor, hence, the title of the volume. She makes a similar point about Afro-Caribbean lesbians in her 1992 essay "Man Royals and Sodomites."²⁵ She says that these women, too, have "silenced stories" (351), and she seeks to share their accounts of their lives to make public their identities. She explains that for many of the women, their movement is circumscribed because of their desire and nonconformity—one of the women is not allowed in people's houses or yards. Part of the point of the essay is to say that lesbians have always been in Jamaica even if that fact is not readily acknowledged. Silvera feels as if both groups (labor migrants and lesbians) are silenced culturally and politically, erased historically, and constrained spatially. However, the other parallel that she draws has to do with the eradication of personal space. These two groups, which can and do overlap, also are denied the possibility of privacy. Silvera conceptualizes them as lacking privacy and always being available to the public world. Silencing is not only a historiographical act of denial, meaning the erasure of the past and present. It is also a spatial act: the undermining of private spaces. In Silvera's stories, the crossing of borders creates spatialized states of vulnerability for Black and queer bodies through acts of interruption.

My discussion of these stories alongside the ethnographic pieces provides an elaboration of feminist geographer Nancy Duncan's theorizing of public and private space. Duncan insists, "Both private and public spaces are heterogeneous and not all space is clearly private or public. Space is thus subject to various territorializing and deterritorializing processes whereby local control is fixed, claimed, challenged, forfeited and privatized. [. . .] The private is a sphere where those families who are not dependent on the state for welfare have relative autonomy. Those who are dependent, however, are often subject to unwarranted intrusion and invasion."²⁶ For Duncan the division made between private and public does not often obtain, especially when we are talking about individuals who are in economically or socially dependent situations. She, like McKittrick, uses the language of territorialization to explain those moments where invasive actions undermine the public-private distinction. It is the realm of intrusion and invasion that has been explored here. These ideas describe the lives of many immigrants and domestic laborers. The body gets territorialized in the process of immigration, as McKittrick suggests. Although landless, one is made a territory. The lives of queer people of color resonate remarkably with this conceptualization of spatial constraint,

invasion, and territorialization. I differ from Duncan in clarifying that the porousness of the public and the private is not simply about those who are economically “dependent.” There are positionalities that render such privileged divisions nearly impossible. Movement through space can erase or at least unhinge cultural conceptions about the distinctions between public and private. This erasing is described here as the dissolution of the private, but a more effective way to characterize this dynamic is the encroachment of the public. The real risk of mobility is the inescapability of public presence and force. For Black queer individuals, one finds that such encroachment can be a serial occurrence, which is why Silvera employs literary seriality in the form of the short-story collection. Canada, often imagined as a space of freedom, a space away from destructive racialisms more familiar in the context of the legacies of US enslavement or Caribbean colonialism, begins to look a little more sinister in light of these women’s stories and the country’s own legislative history.

In Silvera’s hands, movement across borders introduces states of injury and defiantly undermines privacy. We are reminded of the dangers of crossing borders and that some hazards follow us as we traverse national boundaries. The need to work can endanger one. However, is this unpredictability the only thing that renders one vulnerable? Even if this condition is inevitable, what other valences might emerge in a state of movement-formed vulnerability? The scholarly and creative work of Dionne Brand is helpful in beginning to answer these questions. Brand is Canadian, like Silvera, but is of Trinidadian descent. She also explores the complexities of the lives of Caribbean women immigrants. Her novel *In Another Place, Not Here* is a text about movement, movement that causes vulnerability but movement that also suggests the refusal of injury.²⁷ Her text questions the parameters of the assumed vulnerability of the Black queer subject and offers an exploration of movement through space that pushes against notions of confinement.

In Another Place, Not Here is a love story, the story of ongoing desire between two women, Verlia and Elizete. The two women meet while Elizete is working on a sugarcane farm on an unnamed island. Verlia has traveled to the island community to organize the mistreated workers on the farm. When the two first see each other, it is love at first sight. Elizete says, “She break my swing” (15); action and time stop as the two women see each other. The sight of Verlia, who is wet with sweat from the midday sun, completely distracts Elizete from work and from her difficult life with an abusive husband: “That is the first time I feel like licking she neck. She looked like the young in me, the not beaten down and bruised, the not pounded between the legs, the not lost my mother, the not raped, the not blooded, the not tired” (15–16). This

intense moment of connection leads to a powerful relationship between the women. Unfortunately, the reader discovers early on, Verlia dies relatively soon after she and Elizete meet (94). After Verlia's untimely death, Elizete travels to Canada to retrace Verlia's life in hopes of forging a connection with her lost paramour; she goes so far as to meet Verlia's former lover. Much of the novel is about these women's travels. If time stops when they first see each other, Verlia's death propels Elizete into motion, traveling to Canada and moving through the spaces that Verlia had once inhabited and traversed. The novel is a migration narrative, tracking characters' movements across boundaries. However, it is a migration narrative rooted in disrupted desire. The movement of bodies and desire becomes the focus of the narrative, a movement that resists placemaking.

This narrative of migration and desire is invested in the writing of history, particularly, the history of Black women's lives and labor. To appreciate this point fully, one should understand the relationship of the novel to Brand's historical work on Black Canadian women. In 1991, five years before the publication of *In Another Place, Not Here*, Brand produced the volume *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario*.²⁸ This collection of oral histories serves as the conceptual basis for Brand's ensuing novel. Just as with Silvera, I argue that there is a connection between the writer's ethnographic or oral historical work and her fictional enterprise. My point with Silvera was that she uses the material from her oral histories as the foundation for many of her short stories. I think that Brand's interest in history and historical silences, which serve as the impetus for the ethnographic volume, forms the groundwork for the representation of migration and queer desire in the novel. Migration and queer desire are imagined as responses to historical silences.

No Burden to Carry is a significant study of the migration of African Americans and individuals from Caribbean nations to Canada during the early twentieth century, the spread of Garveyism throughout North America, women's involvement in Black-focused institutional spaces, and the impact of the Great Depression of the 1930s on Black North American families. Brand and her co-interviewers, Lois De Shield, Adrienne Shadd, Patricia Hayes, Carol Allain, Linda Carty, and Ayanna Black, provide an archive of Black women's experiences and record Black Canadian life. She frames the collection of oral histories with a meditation on history and historical facts regarding the lives of Black women: "In trying to recover this history, I take the position that a 'historical fact' is somewhat more flexible or self-interested than we are normally led to believe, that history has tended to be written by men about men. Moreover, I take the position that Black history has tended

to excise the place of Black women in it and that to recover Black women as historical actors is not only to clarify the historical record but ultimately to recover a revolutionary method for feminist struggle and Black struggle" (13). Her goal is to reconsider how history has been written in such a way as to write out the lives of Black women. What we have taken to be historical fact, we need to understand as having been written from particular perspectives, creating silences and absences, especially in regard to Black women's experiences. Brand anticipates Saidiya Hartman's ideas about the archive: "The history of black counter-historical projects is one of failure, precisely because these accounts have never been able to install themselves as history, but rather are insurgent, disruptive narratives that are marginalized and derailed before they ever gain a footing."²⁹ Hartman points to the incomplete nature of the archive in regard to Black voices. She points out that countercultural projects often fail because of the way in which master narratives remain stable.³⁰ These narratives are "insurgent" and "deviant" as opposed to becoming set historical narratives. Brand embraces the ideas of insurgency and disruption and uses them as the basis for her narrative. She asserts, "My method developed out of a certainty that there must be something else to tell, something I had not yet heard articulated about Black women's lives in Canada. If we were to ask women themselves how they lived, what they thought about this or that, what would they say? My purpose is to unchain these stories from the genderless bundle of information and misinformation on 'Blacks'" (30). She makes two points here. First, there was something unspoken or unrecorded, some surplus or remainder of material that she wanted to track down. Second, she points out how women's experiences can often be occluded by focuses on institutional history and the lives of charismatic men (often as leaders), the "genderless bundle" that often populates official histories. The collection's emphasis on recording women's lives and work experiences addresses these two concerns explicitly.

These concerns give shape to the characters of the novel *In Another Place*. The novel is an artistic expression of Brand's ideas of revisionist history; she develops her literary story out of her sense of historiographical absences. The novel is most often thought to be about the US bombing of Grenada and the revolution there. Brand had written about the Grenadian revolution in her 1984 poetry collection *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun*.³¹ Caribbean literary scholar Laurie Lambert explains, "In the immediate aftermath of this violence, Brand uses poetry as a tool to shape memories of the revolution and as a salve in the midst of postrevolution trauma. She contends not only with epistemological violence of how the revolution is narrated by the American government in order to justify their invasion of Grenada."³² The poetry col-

lection critiques historical narratives and moves away from an imperialistic perspective of the revolution. A similar move is made in the novel. Brand's text displaces masculinist and imperialistic modes of writing history. The reader sees the perspective of the laborer and not the government, the subaltern and not the empowered, the queer feminine and not the normative patriarchal. The narrative is told from this transgressive angle. There is a movement away from a master narrative to tell something else. The retelling of the bombing of the island nation is the background event. A story of love and loss displaces a story of geopolitical struggles and militaristic action. Brand's narrative writing of history concerns coming to terms with social and spatial restrictions that constitute the quotidian lives of women. The reader never gains a full understanding of the sequence of events. Something about Elizete and Verlia's story always eludes the reader's comprehension. Even as she seeks to fill in gaps, Brand reminds the reader the historical narrative is always incomplete.

A feeling of geographical dislocation is fundamental to life in the Caribbean *and* in Canada, especially for the primary character, Elizete. Early on in the narrative she details her violent and suffocating relationship with her husband, Isaiah, by discussing a junction in the road that led away from their home: "He tell me never let him catch me at the junction. I didn't believe him but I find out soon when I catch the end of his whip. [...] He would always be at that junction when I get there. [...] Trying to get to the junction so much I forget where I was going. I know every track leading to it but when I get there and see Isaiah, it come like he was the end of it" (8). The violence that she experiences at home is compounded by the fear, anxiety, and confusion that she encounters when walking along the road. Isaiah's control over her is so extensive that it permeates the boundary between public and private, home and outside. Elizete does not feel safe at home, but she cannot escape it. Every time she flees home, she reexperiences home at the juncture (through Isaiah's acts of control); he interrupts her movement. Home and outside are indistinct, and both are repressive through the exercise of patriarchal will.

This situation of spatial confusion sets up the experience of spatial misrecognition that characterizes her time in Toronto when she goes there after Verlia dies. The city of Toronto is repeatedly described as a maze—recalling from chapter 1 Cheryl Clarke's poetic description of urban space and government-subsidized housing developments as mazes. This new urban space of Toronto is confusing for Elizete as a homeless, undocumented immigrant: "Each day she travelled another street further and further into the maze. [...] She could not get her mind to recognize this place. Jesus, she was making so many mistakes not being here, in her mind. Only her body reacted—ran from

the police, ate food when it had to, walked, walked, walked, and kept moving. What was this? A room, a station, a clearing, a road. If she could recognize something it would be all right" (53, 66). The fact that Elizete cannot discern her surroundings and is not certain if she is in a room, station, a clearing, or a road registers the exact idea of spatial misrecognition. This inability to recognize indexes her feeling of emotional alienation, which characterizes her first encounter of the city. There is no recognition for a long time. Elizete has gone to Canada to retrace Verlia's time there and reclaim their passion through inhabiting spaces her lover had occupied, but her migratory path is one of confusion, disappointment, and pain. In having Elizete go on this journey looking for Verlia, Brand forces us to think about the spatialization of desire or how desire and intimacy are connected to and can define our experience of geography. The novel elaborates the more recognizable idea that we come to know and remember a place (a nation, a landscape, a beach) primarily through our intimate encounters. After describing the city as a "maze," Elizete later realizes that the problem was "she had no one here" (70). Her lack of intimate connections in Toronto disrupts her ability to make a connection to the place or even to recognize where she is. If it is through intimacy that the world becomes legible to us, then for Brand, intimacy is a device for making sense of the public world and for offering new levels of significance to events and encounters whose meaning appears to have little to do with intimacy, such as, the militaristic attack on the island, which results in Verlia's death.

The story of this deadly act of aggression and its political context, which is at the heart of the narrative, can only be told through same-sex intimacy. The reader arrives at this oblique recounting through the tortuous chronicle of Elizete and Verlia's relationship. This story of female desire ends in this political action that materializes death, destruction, and loss and that sets Elizete into a flight of her own: to find Verlia's old lover Abena. The intimate landscape is charged with political meaning, and vice versa. Brand illustrates that desire—here queer desire—can function as a means of transnational "connectivity." I borrow from Inderpal Grewal in her work in feminism and neoliberalism to make this point.³³ In thinking about "connectivity," Grewal hopes to signal the degree and variety of connections that characterize the transnational. Motifs of flows, connection, and movement that often become synonymous with the "global" do not always take into consideration breaks, interruptions, and missed connections. Connectivity is "a theory in which unevenness, failure, and exclusion can be included" (24).³⁴ In her analysis, Grewal is most interested in circuits of power, resources, and knowledge. However, I think that Brand's work asks a different set of questions: What about circuits of desire? Where is a consideration of desire in our studies

of state power and the marketization of social movements? How might we think about desire as we think about geopolitics? In asking these questions, I build on the work of political scientist Margot Canady, who links sexuality with transnational histories, and anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli, who centers love and, particularly, the “intimate couple” as key points of analysis in assessing empire and liberal governance.³⁵ By using queer intimacy as a lens for military power and social eruption, Brand asks and answers such questions and uses creative writing to explore the ideas these scholars develop. Brand’s work allows us to think specifically about Black queer desire and how racialization complicates the connections we might make between sexuality and the transnational.

The idea of connectivity—with its emphasis on unevenness and failure—offers a valuable way to talk about the specific circuit of desire traced within *In Another Place, Not Here*. Not only is the relationship forcefully interrupted by an aerial attack but also the women’s relationship is itself fraught. Queer desire is not simply liberating and fulfilling; it is troubled and fragile. In frustration, Verlia insists to Elizete: “I am not a man; I cannot take care of you like that; a man can promise things that will never happen not because he is lying but because they are within his possibilities in the world. [. . .] I can only promise to be naked with you. We’ll be very scared walking down a street, hungry all the time, frightened of our own breasts” (72–73). Verlia admits that her love will not free them from social vulnerability. They will still face danger as they move through the world together. This discussion is reminiscent of the conversations that take place between Asha and Baby in Silvera’s short story, but Verlia is more insistent on their susceptibility to violence. Verlia explains that part of the reason that she migrated was because “nothing is safe,” meaning that nowhere is safe, so she must keep moving. She thinks of herself and her lover as being bound by the possibility of injury. Her recognition that there is no place where she can be secure propels her into motion. Her movement through space is about a ubiquitous insecurity, and this insecurity shapes the contours of her desire for Elizete. Verlia acknowledges the possibility of interruption of their love because of the social realities that they face as Black queer women. It is for this reason that they might fear their own breasts: they can feel apprehensive about what these body parts mean and the attention they might draw. The narrative offers a site of queer connectivity—halted movement, intervals of starts and stops, movement and suspension—rather than a connection in the development of the relationship. Such halted, interrupted movement becomes the basis for an innovative and curious conception of queer movement and freedom in Brand’s construction of her characters.

The recognition of this vulnerability and the possibility of the interruption of their desire is epitomized by the aerial attack that ends Verlia's life and sends Elizete on a journey of discovery in Canada:

She hit the ground, tunneling dust, rolling the yellow-white rock face, gravel in her mouth, sand dust, her body, solid, her whole weight resting on her chest, hitting the ground. [. . .] Elizete turned her head to remark it to Verlia, to smile about how she always hit solid ground, and turned her head to say it but saw Verlia, running, turning, leap off the cliff. Her green, green wet clothing flattened to her, her back leap, her face awake, all of her soar, her arms out wide, her chest pulling air, leap. Green, green. Verlia leaping. [. . .] She's leaping. She's tasting her own tears and she is weightless and deadly. She feels nothing except the bubble of a laugh each time she breathes. Her body is cool, cool in the air. Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current, the sign of lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep. She doesn't need air. She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy. (245–47)

This scene of violence and death avoids a tone of tragedy or mourning. There is energy and exuberance. Instead of Verlia's being propelled in the air by the bombing, she leaps. It is she who is deadly. She flees from the destructive militaristic action and from an embodiment that might render her vulnerable; her body falls away in the account. As literary critic Kristina Quynn explains, "the flight illustrates her escape from memory, from body, and ultimately from the very signifying and narrative structures that might otherwise narrate her life and story as heroic."³⁶ The moment is one of agency for this migrant activist. Verlia's empowered movement is the finale toward which the narrative progresses. It is not actually Verlia's death that encourages Elizete to migrate; it is the witnessing of Verlia's transgressive leap. It catapults Elizete into motion. Movement here connotes power and possibility. Rather than concluding that movement is dangerous, Brand recasts it as a means of agency. Verlia is bound by death but not completely defined by it.

One might feel a bit uneasy to think about the possibility of agency and freedom in death. However, Brand is willing to take that risk to forestall simplistic or binary ways of conceiving of Black queer life. She offers a critically valuable representation of violence because it does not deny the reality of death-dealing and life-interrupting actions by the state, nor does she simply allow Elizete and Verlia to fashion a life together. The representation avoids overly pessimistic or optimistic readings of the expression of queer desire and subjectivity. The novel eschews a binary by enabling the possibility of self-expression and freedom within the bounds of death. Brand is able to

fashion agency through the clever figuration of Verlia's death that emphasizes life and freedom, but she also offers to her characters an unexpected narrative agency that we might be less willing to acknowledge. The fact that her death is a leap and not a fall or a push implies that Verlia shapes the course of events. Brand is able to achieve an understanding of queer life in the context of death that few critics may be fully comfortable articulating or accepting.

In discussing Silvera's work, I explained that privacy may not be possible because one can be denied a sense of place; Brand's text suggests that there might be agency in movement, in the embodied refusal of placemaking practices. If one's privacy is always being invaded or interrupted, perhaps being in motion is an empowering position; one might evade the encroaching presence. Brand tracks *fugitive* movement through immigration. Recent critical works on Black fugitivity by Fred Moten and Alexis Pauline Gumbs inform this assessment of Brand's narrative. In the essay "The Case of Blackness," Moten explains how Black identity, even in the context of ubiquitous racism and discrimination, escapes complete objectification in an unnamed way.³⁷ This escape describes the realm of fugitivity in his thinking:

What's at stake is fugitive movement in and out of the frame, bar, or whatever externally imposed social logic—a movement of escape, the stealth of the stolen that can be said, since it inheres in every closed circle, to break every enclosure. This fugitive movement is stolen life, and its relation to the law is reducible neither to simple interdiction nor bare transgression. Part of what can be attained in this zone of unattainability, to which the eminently attainable ones have been relegated, which they occupy but cannot (and refuse to) own is some sense of the fugitive law of movement that makes black social life ungovernable, that demands a para-ontological disruption of the supposed connection between explanation and resistance. (179)

Stereotyped understandings of Blackness and acts of racial objectification never fully encompass Black social or psychic life, life deemed to be "eminently attainable" and controllable by state power. Moten's goal is to direct attention away from the assumption that the relationship between Black people and the state is defined solely by either restriction or defiance. Something lies outside of binary understandings of the juridical and the combatant. The binary merely reinscribes and ensures the stability of the power structure itself and defines the Black subject in a way that is unchanging and one-dimensional; it also fails to recognize those elements of life that escape the claim of being defined. Fugitivity names this realm of the remainder. It is "para-ontological" because we can think of it as lying beside or adjoining yet also beyond our accepted ideas about Black being. It is not unknown,

especially to Black folks, but it is frequently “unthought” in public opinion and the historical record. In his winding prose, Moten offers a language for Blackness that does not first rely upon an antagonistic relationship to the state.³⁸ Just as this Blackness escapes common conceptions, his texts attempt to escape or move away from typical expressions of Black identity.

Gumbs is interested in a similar kind of ontological escape or evasion. In her book *Spill*, she explores how Black female identity escapes or is in flight from complete objectification.³⁹ Building on Hortense Spillers’s work, Gumbs considers how a gendered and racialized signified gets paired with unsteady signifiers. The title of her work, *Spill*, is a play on Spillers’s name as well as a way of thinking about the lives and communications of “nameless women in unknown places who were laughing and looking sideways at each other and a world that couldn’t understand them” (xi; emphasis added). The reference to the “world that could not understand them” describes the ways these productively disrupting women escape categorization or simple understanding. Their meaning spills over and out of containment. The title of the book becomes a way to indicate the overflow of meaning attached to women’s bodies as well as to how Black women’s experiences exist beyond the margins. Her notion of fugitivity has as much to do with the form of her text as it does with the conceptualization of Black female identity. The text itself is a series or collection of poetic meditations on Spillers’s body of work. As opposed to offering a traditional, sustained critical assessment of the work of Spillers, Gumbs presents a catalog of interconnected responses to the work. The text is marked by its seriality and its staccato structure. The disjointed, sequential text is in constant motion in the way it purposefully refuses the “rootedness” of more-linear narrative criticism—the way in which I am writing now. The resistance to a sustained, continued argument that we might expect in a typical critical book is itself an argument for a new mode of writing Black women. Gumbs’s text is fugitive in terms of its relationship to the narrative structure of criticism.

Brand’s narrative is fugitive in its structure because of its refusal of linear plot development. The novel constantly shifts back and forth from the present to the past. These movements across time are often also movements across geography—transitioning from the Caribbean to Canada and back. The narrative is in constant motion, much like the characters; the experience of reading the novel is vertiginous. Clear meaning eludes the reader just as Verlia does with her flight. Brand’s text is challenging to any reader in that it is fragmented and nonlinear in the construction of the narrative. This nonlinear structure materializes the idea of connectivity, with its unevenness and breaks, that, I argue, describes the circuit of queer desire in the novel. Brand’s

elliptical prose, which has its beginning or inciting action at the end of the story keeps approaching that inciting action over the course of the novel. The central event of the novel is Verlia's leap to death. The novel opens after this loss. References to Verlia's "flight" of casualty appear early in the novel (22), and the reader finds out that Elizete had tried to harm herself after Verlia died (55). The reader does not get details of the death, which precedes the present of the novel, until much later. *In Another Place, Not Here* circles around the event of the death moving closer and closer to the telling of its story. The narrative does not move toward the telling of the event; instead, it circles around it, approaching presenting it, and then moving away from it.

Brand adds further complexity to the cyclical narrative by inserting a section that shifts from third-person novelistic prose to first-person diary entries. Toward the end of the novel is a chapter made up of sections from Verlia's journal, including moments directly preceding her death. The journal entries document Verlia's activism as well as her relationship with Elizete. This inclusion changes dramatically the structure of the narrative; it interrupts the overall structure and pacing of the prose. We can think of this confusing and unruly narrative as the formal manifestation of trauma, which the idea of circling and moving toward mentioned above might suggest.⁴⁰ Verlia's death "broke" Elizete emotionally and psychologically: "She tried to mash her own face in with a stone when Verlia went. She'd held it in her hand and pounded and pounded. [. . .] Over and over the stone in her hand moved to the pulp of her mouth, hoping" (50). She had felt rescued and redeemed by the relationship. Brand translates Elizete's emotional devastation and psychic fragmentation into the chaotic narrative moving back and forth through time and presenting itself in different ways. However, I do not think that Brand wants us to understand the death solely in the negative terms of loss, paralysis, mourning, and anguish. The leap is much more about attaining life. When Brand does offer a rendering of the moment of the death, it is surrounded by beauty and natural imagery. There is something enlivening about the death scene. The structure intimates trauma, but the imagery and language depart from this flat assessment.

In moving away from presenting the narrative as a reflection of trauma, the novel captures the ideas of motion, mobility, and fugitivity and in doing so figuratively presents Verlia to the reader. She is always in motion and is the central fugitive figure. She is connected to images of water and movement continually throughout the novel (5). As an organizer and proponent of revolutionary action, she is linked to a troublesome Blackness in Canada and in the Caribbean (142). She exists outside of traditional social understandings of racial identity, sexual expression, and political organization. Her

ideas are fugitive and defiant, and she embodies a nonnormative expression of Black womanhood. Verlia is a character who is always in motion because she refuses to conform to or rest in one social script, one narrative of Black womanhood. Her constant movement is a symbolic expression of her non-normativity. Brand takes this idea and uses it as the basis for the presentation of the narrative structure. Her narrative is in motion as a way to figure the character who is lost before the story begins. From early on, we know that Verlia has died, but Brand reconstitutes her (or at least evokes her) on every page through the narrative structure that mimics her fugitive movement.

With this idea in mind, I return to the relationship between Brand's narrative and ideas about the writing of history. The structure of the narrative reflects Brand's theory of historiography (the flexibility of facts and that there is "something left to tell") in three ways. First, she offers pages from Verlia's journal. The journal entries, subjective musings that supplement official accounts, symbolize the idea of the narrative supplement, that which escapes documentation and offers a counterperspective to the official record. Second, by having the narrative mirror Verlia's movement, Brand symbolically reconstitutes Verlia's lost body as a text so that she is not lost to history. Third, the leap represents an innovative way of writing history. Brand suggests that Verlia's leap is a performative gesture that both stores and transfers meaning. The novel does not just point to texts (such as, the journal) or point to itself as text; it also encourages the reader to think about an empowered gesture as a means of writing history. The leap records and transmits an understanding about Black diasporic identity (this point is elaborated below). Within the understood limits of a novel, Brand is pointing to embodied movement, what Diana Taylor would call the repertoire,⁴¹ as an additional historiographic supplement, and it is for this reason that Brand keeps retuning again and again to Verlia's leap. The gesture helps to communicate that "something left to tell."

Critics Carole Boyce Davies and Soyica Diggs Colbert offer other ways to understand Verlia's aerial fugitivity that clarifies how it is a mechanism for agency and writing the past and what exactly is being communicated by the leap. In her discussion of geographical understandings of Caribbean identity, Boyce Davies emphasizes how the "interplay of movement, escape, and return" creates the pathway for agency.⁴² She explains how flight metaphors in Black diasporic culture, such as stories of enslaved Africans who fly back to Africa, are expressions of desires for empowerment and self-definition, adding a different level of meaning to motifs of Caribbean migration.⁴³ Verlia's leap can be read as a reworking of the trope of the flying African.⁴⁴ This trope developed out of stories of captured Africans who upon seeing the life that lay

ahead for them took flight and flew across the ocean back home. The trope gets elaborated in and is used as the basis of Morrison's *Song of Solomon*.⁴⁵ This flight can be thought of as both a rejection of the realities of forced labor and broken kinship ties as well as a desire for return to one's homeland. Boyce Davies explains, "Inherent in what is clearly an open myth of flying Africans, is the possibility of transcendence of local space and the assumption of another geography" (97). The flight for Verlia is about transcendence beyond spaces of enclosure and invasion and the imagining of a geography unlike the ones that she has known, those she deemed not safe. This idea of "another geography," a new social space, resonates with my discussion in the previous chapter of Pat Parker's desire for spatial justice and a new social world. The leap is a different articulation of spatial justice, one in prose narrative rather than poetry and one that is a gesture rather than a demand. Just as Clarke and Parker use their poetic projects to intertwine the past and the present to make clear spatialized inequalities, Brand uses the leap with its evocations of diasporic flight to weave in historical and folkloric assertions of Black will and agency as the narrative response to queer experiences of confinement and violence.

In her discussion of flying Africans narratives, Colbert sees these narratives as conquering death and extending life through flight. She insists that this type of narrative functions "as racialized conduits that serve as a source for reimagining futures within the black diaspora that are predicated on understanding of the human that exceed the physical instantiation in the body."⁴⁶ Flight, unencumbered movement, becomes a practice of psychic preservation and an act of resurrection. In a stunning reworking, Brand positions the queer woman as the flying African defying the state's right to decide who lives and dies. Queer desire becomes the context for a movement that frees one not only from constraint but from the body itself. Because of racism and homophobia, the actual geography of risk is written on the flesh, and flight frees us from this overdetermined flesh and promises a beautiful, yet heart-breaking freedom.

Brand, like Silvera before her, suggests that migratory movement through space is unpredictable because one never knows if and when constricting currents of power might detain, invade, or fracture one's body, especially as a racial or sexual minority. However, Brand insists that the possibility always exists of eluding and even overcoming these currents. The previous chapter explains how the desire for movement enables the exploration of queer desire and the wish for a less-constraining social world. Here, queer desire becomes the context for a movement that frees one not only from social constraint but from the body itself. The escape from the body visualized in the novel

is a metaphorical demand for justice and unrestrained movement. It is the body and the way that it gets read by the social world that creates states of vulnerability from which we might feel compelled to flee. Willful movement is the response to the threat of injury. The perception of being bound by injury—whether that means being bombed by a military missile, being violated by an abusive employer, being beaten up and thrown in front of a car, or being shot by a police officer's bullet—encourages a recurring emphasis on embodied movement, a movement that carries with it a yearning for intimacy—even if those intimacies will be short-lived. These threatened bodies in motion are bodies that are defined by queer desire, and this desire abets the threat in most cases. The next part of this book explores desire's ability to help one negotiate space and evade threat. Desire and intimacy are the only imaginable paths through threat—whether inside or out.

Together, chapters 1 and 2 of *Black Queer Freedom* chart how artists respond to and reconfigure marginalization. Both spatial justice and territorialization (along with circumscribed movement) express realities of historic and ongoing marginalization—a term itself that reflects a consciousness of the spatial ordering of the social world. Cultural critic bell hooks explains how marginalization is more than a site of deprivation, lack, and neglect. It can also become a site of possibility and a space of resistance; it is a “space of radical openness” because it represents a location from which one can provide new insights on the social world.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, this space of openness is not free from threat. The margin, hooks goes on to explain, “is a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a ‘safe’ place. One is always at risk” (149). Thinking about these two ideas—margin as site of risk and possibility—is the conclusion toward which the writers discussed here point. Silvera outlines carefully the kinds of dangers that emerge from the experiences of migrants, especially women migrants; she sketches out the parameters of precarity and marginalization. Building on such work while moving in a different direction, Brand reformulates that marginalization into a kind of freedom that is almost unrecognizable or unimaginable. Ultimately, I read Verlia's leap as an expression of radical and, perhaps, uncomfortable possibility, a possibility scored with risk. The leap is both a result of marginalization and spatial constriction and a site for the articulation of defiant subjectivity. If Clarke and Parker in their poetry collections make demands for spatial justice and request new ways of organizing the social world, perhaps, Brand asks for new ways of thinking about the space of freedom and about how we write about it. As hooks goes on to assert, “Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary

practice” (152). She insists on the complexity of space as well as on the ability of art to reveal and transform this complexity. I have taken up this idea in these chapters to show how artists interrupt limiting spatial understandings that seek to lock the body in place and imagine different possibilities for the marginalized Black queer body, a body continually depicted as being surrounded by threat as it moves through space.

PART TWO

BODIES IN SPACES OF INJURY

3. UNEVEN VULNERABILITY

Queer Hypervisibility and Spaces of Imprisonment

Gerald, sun-kissed ten thousand times on the nose
and cheeks, didn't stand a chance . . .
[buzzards] who now hover above his track
and at night light upon his back.
—Etheridge Knight, "For Freckle-Faced Gerald"

This chapter and the next shift attention from queer individuals' embattled relationship to public space to their negotiation of institutional spaces and the unpredictable dynamics within them. The institutional spaces that I concentrate on are those connected to state and dominant ideologies and not those that marginalized communities create to protect and support themselves.¹ Such institutions become the focus of important analysis by artists and thinkers interested in the elucidating public threats to Black queer bodies. If the first part of *Black Queer Freedom* tracks how artists respond to minorities' constrained and inhibited movement through streets and across national borders, this second part focuses on how artists understand built environments of institutions, such as prisons and medical facilities, as spaces that pose physical and psychological threats to queer bodies—even as they sometimes claim to be helpful. I consider if one can find personal freedom and autonomy within spaces of enclosure—spaces in which movement and personal liberties are necessarily limited—and in what ways these spaces of enclosure extend their influence outside in ways that threaten the queer body.

To begin, this chapter focuses on queer visibility and the uneven distribution of vulnerability within the space of prison. Using essayistic writing, visual art, and life writing, I argue that incarcerated gay men present prisons as spaces of exposure and seek to disorder the structural logics that enable

such institutional acts of exposure. The exact idea of unevenness used to frame this chapter gets to the heart of the concept of spatial differentiation that subtends the politics of scale discussed in the introduction: the same space can be experienced in different (here, uneven) ways because of the body one occupies and how that body gets read. The chapter explores the experiences of out-gay men in prison, an institutional site in which being nonnormative can magnify the general vulnerability associated with detention. My consideration of incarcerated sexual minorities in art responds to critical work on the complex sexual cultures that the homosocial space of prisons can encourage. In *Criminal Intimacy*, Regina Kunzel provides a fascinating historical consideration of sex acts and patterns of sexual life in prison that challenges how we conceptualize modern sexual identity.² However, I am not interested in prison sex. Resisting the idea that sexual identity cannot obtain within the boundaries of incarceration, the chapter looks at sexual identity and desire and how desire is a source of queer identity in a way that pushes against the official and unofficial regulations and means of organizing incarcerated life. Prison sexual culture is part of but not the defining element of the discussion in this chapter. If we center Black gay men's lives in our analysis, we find that some insist on an out-gay identity in terms of desire and self-expression, whether or not they have sex, in a way that resists typical modes of thinking about the vulnerability occasioned by imprisonment and that exposes the racial and sexual dynamics that shape the experience of detention.

What might it mean, I wonder, to be queer-identified and locked in the homosocial space of confinement with the hierarchical gendered and power dynamics? In seeking to answer this question, this chapter examines how the experience of incarceration is imagined as a process of constantly exposing or making visible the physical body and the mind of the inmate. This process is intensified for queer men because of public perceptions about their gender identity and sexual desire. These men endure enhanced levels of surveillance that render them vulnerable in multiple ways. This compounded surveillance offers insight on the idea of the injury-bound subject, or the individual surrounded by the possibility of threat. The writing and visual art by men in prison chart this incarcerated hypervisibility; in particular, the edited collection of writing by gay men in prison *Blackheart 2* (1984) and the autobiographical text *Memoir: Delaware County Jail* (2006), in the context of other writing by and about Black gay men, are the primary focuses of the discussion. These imprisoned artists counteract and refuse the forceful showing of their bodies and desire even as they remain locked in place and scrutinized by multiple individuals.

The poet Etheridge Knight offers a useful, if unexpected, starting point to assessing how Black queer artists explore the complex dynamics of incarceration. In 1968 Knight published the important volume *Poems from Prison* of the writing he did while serving an eight-year sentence for drug-related armed robbery.³ Knight had become addicted to opiates after using morphine to treat severe wounds he received while serving as a medical technician during the Korean War. His addiction ultimately contributed to the conviction. Dealing with addiction, combat trauma, and the loss of freedom, prison became a space for Knight to process personal and societal dilemmas. *Poems from Prison* is a significant text of the Black Power era that explores the radicalizing of Black citizens, documents the physical and psychological mistreatment of incarcerated individuals, tracks how racism is institutionalized, alludes to the phenomenon that will be called the school-to-prison pipeline, and situates poetry as a useful device for social critique. The poem “For Freckle-Faced Gerald” from that volume demonstrates many of these features while also shedding light on the complex sexual dynamics that emerge within the homosocial space of imprisonment.⁴ After alerting the reader about the challenges of incarceration, especially for the young, the poem ends by referencing “buzzards” that “hover above [Gerald’s] track / and at night light upon his back” (19). Throughout the poem, Knight constructs an image of Gerald as soft, innocent, and not masculine. He is perceived by others as being weak, so he “didn’t stand a chance” within the environment. The final line of the poem is an allusion to death *and* sexual violation. In highlighting the circumstances of this kind of violation, the poem emphasizes Gerald’s physical appearance and his behaviors; he is very visible in prison. This visibility arguably makes him vulnerable to the “buzzards” that prey upon him. Knight emphasizes the particular visibility of the perceived nonnormative or queer body within the space of prison and links this visibility to vulnerability. These ideas to which Knight, a heterosexual Black man, alludes become key elements in writings by gay men about prison. Nonetheless, incarcerated gay writers undermine simplistic understandings of vulnerability and move away from a focus on sexual violation, ideas that emerge in Knight’s poem. The contributors to *Blackheart 2* in the 1980s and Reginald Hall in the twenty-first century critique the violent prison gaze that Knight’s poem emblemizes through the figure of Gerald.

In documenting their experiences and impressions of incarceration as Black gay men, the writers considered here alter perceptions about minority bodies, reveal circuits of power, redirect accepted ways of thinking about identity, and reimagine what visibility means within detention. They create texts concerned with disordering the space of prison to show how bodies get

differentiated. I use these ideas about exposure and disordering to talk about the vulnerability that incarceration creates as well as how one may challenge such restriction. I offer a way of comprehending the relationship between prisons and the outside world that does not posit them as microcosms (mostly replicating the social dynamics of the outside world) nor as antipodes (so distinct that they reflect a completely different kind of governing logic from the rest of society). The space of incarceration is dynamic in that it simultaneously reproduces social and affective forces apparent in the outside world and creates unique circumstances given its own regulations and social order.⁵ The built environment of a prison or jail presents a complex and sometimes contradictory set of relations for its inhabitants: it creates a special kind of confined vulnerability, but the possibility of the redirection of meaning through disorder and disruption can offer the incarcerated unexpected paths for navigating confinement and expressing identity. Such redirection recalls the fugitive movement of migration discussed in chapter 2 that defied juridical control. However, the movement within carceral space is different because one is never outside of the grasp or gaze of the administration. That being said, this movement is still transgressive in that it redefines the meaning and possibility of carceral space as not solely a space of definite punishment but, rather, as a realm of autopoiesis, or self-actualization, recalling the discussion of reimagining urban streets in chapter 1.

The writing by gay men in prison from the 1980s collected in the volume *Blackheart 2* illustrates how gay men's experiences of incarceration are of uneven visibility, meaning that their visibility consists of multiple layers or levels (unlike that of other inmates) and is differentiated based upon their body and its physical location and the expression of desire. This uneven, layered visibility results from processes of exposure and creates extreme conditions of vulnerability and sets them apart from other incarcerated individuals in some ways. The volume's contributors recognize this vulnerability and seek out ways to disrupt a specific incarcerated visibility. The kind of disordering of hypervisibility explored in *Blackheart 2* is elaborated and contested in later cultural work, such as the life writing *Memoir: Delaware County Prison*. This twenty-first-century text situates same-sex desire prominently as a way to refuse queer vulnerability and rewrite familiar scripts about male prison rape. Collectively, the artists discussed represent prison as a space of punishment and as a space that can be disordered, implying that social meaning at times can be re-routed and transformed in the service of queer identity and desire.

The out-of-print volume *Blackheart 2: A Journal of Writing and Graphics* was published in 1984 by a group called the Blackheart Collective. The found-

ing members of the collective were Fred Carl, Anthony Q. Crusor, and Isaac Jackson, and they constituted an organization of Black gay writers focused on publishing the work of Black queer men and creating networks for these men. They published their first volume early in 1984. Taking what might be considered an unexpected tack, the editors dedicate the second volume, produced later that year, to prison writing; the subtitle of the edition is *The Prison Issue*. They open the collection by saying, “Most of us know someone, either a relative, friend, or acquaintance, who has spent some time in jail. The fact is that one out of four black men in America spend some part of their lives in jail or prison. One out of every four black men—that’s black gay/straight/young/old/ugly/pretty/stupid/smart men—in America. It’s not often that we hear from any of these men, especially the self-identified gay men in prison.”⁶ The members of the collective created the volume in response to two parallel phenomena: the high rates of incarceration of Black men in the United States and the absence of consideration of the experience of “self-identified gay men,” in general, and within the increasing number of Black inmates, specifically. During the 1960s and 1970s, the period preceding the dramatic increase in the US incarcerated population, a number of important Black political figures were imprisoned, and their writings helped to situate prisons as significant sites of radicalism and social critique within the Black imaginary: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis, George Jackson, Eldridge Cleaver, Assata Shakur, and, as referenced above, Etheridge Knight all published works that deal with these concerns during the time period. This body of work helps to cement a tradition of imprisoned intellectuals rooted in the concept of political imprisonment. Prisons hold a critically regarded place in the Black radical imaginary, but there is little discussion of how this new situation in the 1980s might relate to or even differ from the earlier moment in terms of inmate experience. Even though a large percentage of Black men are incarcerated throughout the late twentieth century, little is done to document queer men’s experiences or incorporate their voices prominently in the public sphere or within the radical imaginary in the early 1980s.⁷ There are studies that turn their attention to the experiences of queer men in prison as the work of Russell Robinson and Dean Spade illustrates—the discussion returns to their respective projects below—but few take as their point of departure the perspective of Black queer men.⁸

Given these absences, the Blackheart Collective writers move through uncharted territory: they are interested in the lives of men who are not well-known activists and cultural figures and in the quotidian experience of Black gay men in prison. They are writing at a time when there is a massive expansion in prison building as well as a development of them as labor industries,

which results in more people incarcerated. In 1971 President Richard M. Nixon declared a policy-shifting War on Drugs, which led to a dramatic increase in the number of US citizens in prison by 1980, and this surge would continue through the 1980s and beyond. The Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program of 1979 legalized the transportation of prison-made goods across state lines, which encouraged seeing prison labor as profitable on a national scale.⁹ The building of more prisons, in response to cramped and dilapidated conditions, ironically led to further bed shortages. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore explains, this reality impacted the procedural treatment of parolees: rapid prison expansions led to bed shortages, which resulted in less procedural leniency about parole violations.¹⁰ More prison beds created the need for more prisoners and impacted approaches to the enforcement of policies and laws. These shifts in policy provide the mechanisms for a dramatic increase in the incarcerated population. The 1980s witnessed the largest increase in the number of prisons and jail inmates of the twentieth century—until the 1990s. The number jumped from 474,368 in 1980 to 1,148,702 in 1990, a difference of 674,334—meaning on average nearly 200 people per day were incarcerated for a decade. This increase was independent of a change in crime rate.¹¹ Experiences with jail and prison were becoming increasingly common, and the editors wanted to illuminate for a general audience the complex nature of this experience within the shifting political contexts of incarceration.

It is not only the recognition of the increasing numbers of imprisoned Black men that motivates the creation of the volume. There is a specific desire to voice the concerns, anxieties, and desires of gay men in prison. The editors want these men to be seen as subjects with voices and not mere victims of inevitable institutionalized violence. This particular focus has to do with the conceptualization of same-sex desire and public identity as more than a right to a particular preference but, rather, as a politicized social positionality that actively challenges norms. Beginning in the mid-1970s and into the 1980s, there is a paradigmatic recasting of homosexuality and same-sex desire as conduits of radical activism, in general, not only the upholding of the right to love. This idea quickly becomes an integral element of Black gay culture in the 1980s as many of these activists and thinkers challenge gender, sexual, and racial norm structures that govern people's lives. The notion of being "out" as a political act and of avowing same-sex desire as being productively transgressive becomes so embedded in cultural expression during this period that artist and activist Joseph Beam declares, "Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act of the eighties," in the influential essay "Brother to Brother," which appears at the end of his important volume *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* (1986).¹² Although this assertion is arguably problem-

atic in its privileging of one path of desire and one kind of queer subject, it reveals the connection made between political rhetoric and identity at the time period. If the increase in incarceration demands more attention to the voices of inmates, then the emphasis placed on being out makes the voices of gay men in prison become crucial in the opinion of those dedicated to arguing for social reform and undermining oppressive ideologies. It is for these reasons that the members of the Blackheart Collective shift their gaze and ours to prison art.

The collective's project is in some ways an outgrowth of the *Gay Community News* prison column. The *Gay Community News* (GCN) was a weekly periodical published in Boston from 1973 to 1992.¹³ In 1975 GCN began the Prison Project, a program dedicated to responding to inmates' letters and to getting copies of GCN to them. Part of the impetus for the project was that solidarity began to develop between gay activists and prisoners during the 1970s because of criminalization of homosexuality and the regular arrests of gay and bisexual men.¹⁴ Due to the success of Prison Project, starting in 1981, GCN's editors dedicated regular space to a prisoner's column. The contributions to this column—mostly personal essays, critiques of the justice system, and social commentaries on US social dynamics—provide the context for the writing in *Blackheart 2*. At least one of the contributions for *Blackheart 2* is taken directly from the pages of GCN. The column offers significant insights on the specific realities of imprisonment in the 1980s and the conditions that would make being an out-gay man especially taxing within the environment of incarceration.

Many of the writers included in the GCN column explain that beginning in the early 1980s, there is a discernible shift in how prisons are run and in the treatment of inmates that negatively impacts queer men. Jack Kunsman's piece is especially enlightening in this respect:

Being gay and in prison has never really mixed well, but, at least, [in the past] it was almost tolerable. A decade ago a gay prisoner was looked upon as a degenerate with no purpose in life but to satisfy the sexual needs and desires of the "macho" prisoners. That hasn't changed much, but a change, however subtle, has indeed occurred. Gay life in prison has become almost unbearable. The new far-right conservative "moralists" have taken over the administrations of this country's prisons and are exerting unbelievable pressures on today's gay inmates. Some of us can cope and adjust to these pressures; sadly most of us can't. Homophobia in prison has, seemingly, increased to dramatic proportions. Gone are the days of reluctant acceptance/tolerance, replaced by outright and open hate of homosexuals—usually verbal, sometimes physical.¹⁵

Kunsman suggests that Ronald Reagan's assumption of the office of president in 1981 and the rise to power of the far right at many levels of government under his administration as well as the emergence of Jerry Falwell's "moral majority" dramatically impacted the quotidian experience of prisoners. Reagan's domestic policies, which were often seen as being at least neglectful of minority communities if not wholly anti-LGBTQ and anti-Black, heavily relied upon discourses of morality. The subject of morality constituted an important element of Reagan's political strategy and his administrative approach. He made it clear that politics and morality needed to be linked intimately, and by morality he specifically meant conservative Christian strictures. In 1984—the same year as the publication of *Blackheart 2*—Reagan gave a speech at an ecumenical prayer breakfast, which was later published as "Politics and Morality Are Inseparable" in the *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy*.¹⁶ In the speech, Reagan insists that in the 1960s the United States made steps "toward secularizing [the] nation and removing religion from its honored place" (8). He goes on to assert, "The truth is, politics and morality are inseparable. And as morality's foundation is religion, religion and politics are necessarily related. We need religion as a guide; we need it because we are imperfect. And our government needs the church because only those humble enough to admit they are sinners can bring to democracy the tolerance it requires in order to survive. A state is nothing more than a reflection of its citizens; the more decent the citizens, the more decent the state" (10). The speech is explicitly about prayer in school, but implicitly he outlines his thinking about government and state-supported institutions, in general.¹⁷ Reagan's rhetoric consistently links not simply politics in the abstract but public policy to Protestant morality that all but declared the Bible as the basis for the proper direction for government at all levels. Reagan advanced a theory of "trickle-down economics" as the basis for economic policy, and his administrative decisions and rhetoric also encouraged a "trickle-down" morality policy in that he empowered a public discourse of Protestant morality, which emerged within all contexts of governmental administration, including the running of prisons. Kunsman highlights this idea in his piece.

Reagan reinvigorated a discourse of morality during the 1980s that framed many social institutions, including prisons. John J. DiIulio's influential monograph *Governing Prisons*, published three years after Reagan's speech, epitomizes how the discourse of morality diffused through government, generally, and began to influence thinking about the running of prison, specifically.¹⁸ A political scientist, DiIulio links religion to political theory, and he served as the director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives under

President George H. W. Bush. In his book DiIulio contends that inmates are the problem, and *civil management* is the solution. The book is comparative in that it looks to prison administrative systems in Texas, California, and Michigan; he does extensive interviews with prison staff (and purposefully not inmates) at these prisons. However, it is the Texas “control” system, headed by a Lutheran minister, “who was as comfortable with a prison manual as he was with the Bible,” that gets most of DiIulio’s attention and appreciation (195). DiIulio describes the imprisonment situation in the United States as the result of “a history of good intentions” (12), and he critiques sociological views that shed light on the ecology of prisons and the formations of interior publics as the determining factors in dynamics within spaces of incarceration. He insists that riots (his language) and other problems that plague modern prisons are examples of “failed prison management” (30). Social inequality and institutional neglect are not the problem in his mind; the lack of systematically enforced policies and strict (even paternalistic) punishments undermine the usefulness and social value of incarceration. For him, inmates are violent and in need of a moralizing structure, and disturbances and rule-breaking substantiate this idea. This argument about the need to reestablish moral order to end institutional chaos resonates harmoniously with Reagan’s argument that the secularization that caused the social upheaval of the 1960s required a moral- and, specifically, a religion-focused government (i.e., his presidency) to reestablish social order.

Even though DiIulio argues that prisons should be “humane,” he also advances the notion of inmates as inveterate, childlike criminals that are in desperate need of patriarchal guidance and that prison administrators should be supported (rhetorically and materially) by the government. In the monograph, strict control and moral guidance are the ostensible solutions to problems in prisons, as the parallel between prison manual and Bible implies—of course, this understanding is a parallel to the connection Reagan implies in his speech between the Bible and the running of schools (the school manual symbolically). The focus on prison management is actually a focus on the need for centralized, morality-focused discipline as the only way for prisons to run effectively. The book is an extended argument for an expansion of the US prison system and for the place of religious ideology within prison policy making. Through his interviews and analysis, DiIulio documents and advances the shifting ideology to which Kunsman points. Mirroring Reagan, DiIulio rejects sociological assessments of the institutions and social dilemmas and emphasizes control and rhetoric of violence and immorality. DiIulio apologizes for the prison system (and its expansion) and presents an academic argument for the discourse of morality as a key to

improving prisons. The work reflects a desire to move away from explaining problems in prisons by referring to race hatred, judicial interference, lack of funding for treatment programs, and overcrowded conditions. These issues surface as symptoms of a larger problem having to do with morality. Religion and the enforcement of policy become inseparable from this perspective, and Kunsman illuminates this idea on a microscale in his essay. In reflecting a Reagan-era investment in governance and in morality as governance, DiIulio's book takes seriously the philosophical imperative that "it is also important for society, that he, whom it punishes, in order to set an example, should correct, if possible, his morals in the prison" (47). Unfortunately, the writings of inmates show that this correction of morality happens unevenly and has a particularly painful impact on queer inmates.

As noted above, it is important to pay attention to the drastic increases in incarceration during the Reagan era. Many studies present and assess such quantitative data; however, this data is not the only site to turn to in making sense of the increases. It does not do enough to help us to understand the experience of incarceration during this historical moment. Kunsman indicates that the change in federal administration resulted in changes in the regional and local administrations of prisons. As suggested in my discussion of DiIulio's interviews with prison staff members, an ideological shift happens as the number of the incarcerated increases. During this period, Kunsman notes, gay men were forced to "wear special uniforms which advertise the wearer's homosexuality," compelled to work in the most demeaning jobs, often isolated from the general population, and kept from receiving gay-culture publications even though many heterosexual inmates could often receive almost any kind of publication, including pornography (5). An ideological emphasis on punishing and correcting behaviors deemed immoral becomes more dominant as prison populations increase. The prison administrators and guards not only did little to nothing to protect out-gay inmates but also often actively harassed them and rendered them defenseless against the rest of the population. In his *GCN* essay on prison racism, Black gay inmate Roosevelt Williamson states that he had "been threatened by staunch racist prison guards, who [were] in outright solidarity with racist, right wing, neonazi, neo-fascist, Ku Klux Klan views."¹⁹ He adds that many guards were actively "on the prowl looking to catch someone in the sexual act" so that the prisoners could be beaten or punished (1). There is a special desire to locate and discipline inmates who have consensual sex in prison and to make them objects of ridicule. The readers of *GCN* quickly learn that the world of prisons became a barometer for the social and political climate of the US public sphere regarding race and sexuality.

Many of the GCN essays trace how the space of prison is especially precarious for gay men given the ideological concerns of those who run prisons. If inmates were avowing an out-gay identity, they were effectively defying the administration even if they were not breaking explicit rules because of the connection between homosexuality and immorality. A number of (official and unofficial) policy changes occurred to limit severely the lives and movements of queer-identified men, as Williamson's experiences intimate. There is an emphasis on queer vulnerability here, but it is a constructed vulnerability linked to the political state of the nation as well as discourses of "morality" in relationship to state institutions—one only has to think of Reagan's extensive use of welfare mothers and welfare fraud in his 1976 and 1980 bids in the run for president to recognize this discourse of morality influencing policy making and institutional structures. The concerns about queer vulnerability in these historical contexts form the foundation for the pieces collected in *Blackheart 2*, but the selections highlight how anti-Black racism complicates simple understandings of queer vulnerability by situating it in a longer history of racialized discrimination and illuminating the power differentials that existed between inmates, instead of only those between administrators and inmates. Using race as a lens shows how there were often layers of imprisoned vulnerability.

Throughout *Blackheart 2* is a recurring connection of the space of prison to that of enslavement, which Williamson anticipates in his 1982 GCN essay when he calls imprisonment "legal slavery" (1). The contributors to *Blackheart 2* regularly use the language of slavery to make sense of late twentieth-century prison spaces. Isaac Glenn Smith calls prison a "slave ship," and Darnell Tatum describes the entire criminal justice system as a "system of slavery."²⁰ This connection is sensible given US histories and contemporaneous realities of spaces of incarceration in at least three specific ways. First, a known legacy of racialized servitude, punishment, and detention forms a large part of US history. Second, the physical and emotional realities of incarceration can create the sense of being socially constrained in a totalizing way. Third, racialized histories haunt the geographical sites of many prisons; for example, the Louisiana State Penitentiary, nicknamed Angola, is situated on the exact land of the nineteenth-century Angola Plantation. The linking of prison and enslavement is quite familiar to many twenty-first-century readers because it has become a dominant frame for the discussion of prison's relationship to African American life in the United States, as the work of Angela Davis, Dennis Childs, and Ava Duvernay illustrates.²¹ Davis, Childs, and Duvernay connect prison to enslavement through the concept of convict labor, which they situate as a manifestation of *postemancipation* enslavement because of

the Thirteenth Amendment's exclusion of prison labor in its outlawing of "involuntary servitude."²² The connection of contemporary incarceration and enslavement is meant to undermine the idea of the abolition of forced labor and to push against the civil rights era-derived notion of progress toward racial equality over the twentieth century. The exploration of prison labor functions as an analytical tool for undermining this way of thinking about history and the social world.

Labor is not the only frame through which the writers in *Blackheart 2* analogize prison with enslavement. Tatum's essay begins by talking about the curious dynamics of sexual oppression within the space of prison before he reaches his conclusion about prison as a site of slavery: "There was main talk about how fucked *homos* were, out one side of their neck, how they were no good. I even read a note by one of the group that stated all faggots need to be killed, etc. Then on the other hand, all would sneak and get their dick sucked or would speak on another prisoner walking down the hall whose ass was big, about how they would like to get into their ass, etc." (34; original emphasis). These kinds of comments that Tatum would overhear remind us of the negative attitudes toward queer men in the space of prison; however, these comments also indicate actual currents of same-sex desire and the possibilities of sexual activity most often referred to as "situational homosexuality."²³ He identifies what he comes to call a lack of "sexual freedom," meaning restrictive understanding of sexual identity and a resulting regulation of intimacy. The recognition of the absence of sexual freedom in prison is the first link in the conceptual chain that connects prison to enslavement. The policing of sexual freedom unites the two experiences (incarceration and enslavement) for the writer; both institutions control the body as well as circuits of desire, often through moralizing rhetoric—the Bible was often used to justify enslavement to those in bondage. One might wonder why it is permissible for the fellow inmates to discuss "faggots" as a problem while expressing sexual desire for men. How do they escape their own criticisms in their comments and actions? The simple answer is that they are not faggots. In this context, "faggot" has at least three levels of meaning: effeminate men or those who demonstrate gender expression and physical movements (walking, gestures, etc.) that mirror conventional understandings of femininity; those who fail to align themselves with a particular expression of aggressive masculinity or ascribe to limiting ideas of gender identity; and men who have same-sex desire as a defining element of their identity regardless of gender expression. Many different kinds of individuals could be criticized in the terms the men discuss because many individuals may not participate effectively in the structuring ideology of masculinity. In each case, there is a

perception of failing to embrace fully a particular expression of empowered heteropatriarchal masculinity—whether through outright assertion or inference. Those who are *perceived* to fail in this way occupy the space of the “faggot.” The others who claim a destructive heterosexual masculinity and even those who sneak around and keep from public view their sexual activity are able to avoid ridicule. In Tatum’s essay, faggotry has to do with a kind of public visibility or public perception of both gender and sexual expression.

I emphasize a particular element of the denial of sexual freedom in prison that Tatum describes: visibility. His implied emphasis on perception has everything to do with visibility. It is not just that there is vocal antiqueser sentiment; much attention is also paid to the bodies, movements, remarks, and gestures of other men, particularly, nonnormative inmates. What he points to is a continual monitoring of the queer body in the space of prison. The lack of sexual freedom is combined with this monitoring as Tatum advances his argument about the prison as a system of slavery. The connection between visibility and incarceration reminds one of the idea of carceral spaces as being engineered around the concept of panopticism. This notion stresses constant and complete surveillance as a key element of detention.²⁴ In writing about panopticism, Michel Foucault elaborates the concept by explaining how the primary method of state detention is one that makes the prison-guard gaze symbolically manifest at every moment and place in the experience of incarceration from intake to exit.²⁵ Being in prison means being constantly scrutinized in the most intimate way—as an extreme example, Williamson discusses the regularity of rectal searches as part of his time in prison (3). Foucault insists that detention makes use of strategies that seek “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power”; surveillance becomes an extension of disciplinary power.²⁶ The detained body is made a highly visible body through multiple techniques of surveillance.²⁷

That being said, Tatum’s comments suggest that a different kind of visibility emerges for the queer body even in this context of such systematized visibility. Foucault declares that the mechanism of power through surveillance is so ubiquitous that it “produces homogenous effects of power,” meaning that the effects are constant, regularized, and widespread in their applications; no one in the system can escape its grasp (202). However, the effects of this power are not ultimately “homogenous” in their impact. Not all bodies experience the panopticon surveillance in the same way. Some bodies—like the prisoner with the notable “ass,” who inspired both dread and desire—experience *layered surveillance*. With this point I build on Joy James’s insightful critique of the acclaimed theorist: “Foucault, however, makes no mention of sexual

and racial binary oppositions to designate social inferiority and deviancy as biologically inscribed on the bodies of nonmales and nonwhites.”²⁸ Foucault’s theorizing deemphasizes and, perhaps, ignores totally how ideas about sexual and racial hierarchies permeate all sectors of society and complicate simple understandings about the exercise of state power. Sexual and racial minorities encounter state power through the prism of these hierarchies magnifying and multiplying angles of manipulation by the state as well as by nonstate actors (everyday citizens who benefit from the hierarchies). The gaze of punishment (by, for example, intake officers, prison officials, guards, and medical staff) is coupled with the salacious and threatening gaze of other prisoners. I describe the hypervisibility of the queer body within the carceral setting.

The reader of the *Blackheart 2* volume comes to understand that a disciplining gaze also emanates from other inmates. There is a monitoring that has little to do with the state-sanctioned and panopticon disciplining of the body, as such—even as it is emboldened by this state power. The experience of being incarcerated is not just about dealing with the prison administration—even if that is DiIulio’s implication. One must also interact with or avoid the other inmates who bring with them their preconceived notions about other racial groups, ethnicities, gender expression, and sexual orientation. One might think about the inmates as serving as extensions of the powers of the guards and administrators, especially if one thinks in terms of informants. However, I think it is more useful to recognize how the network of inmates functions as its own disciplining set of affective and psychosexual structures that at times intersects with and other times does not necessarily intersect with the governing mechanism of incarceration. What happens when inmates have their own methods and ethics of policing within and alongside a carceral setting? This question is the one being asked and answered in the writings discussed here. In light of Foucault, the goal of the prison setting is to produce in all subjects a consciousness and visibility that ensures the functioning of punishing power. However, the *Blackheart 2* pieces indicate that the inmate-derived disciplining gaze does not create a democratic distribution of such visibility. Within the panoptic gaze, there are still individuals who create for themselves empowered positions through monitoring others. The way that one is able to move through the space of prison depends almost entirely upon how one is perceived by others, how one’s body is read.

What is the response to this intensified, doubled surveillance of the queer body? The *Blackheart 2* volume itself is one cultural rejoinder. The contributions to the prison-focused collection seek to counteract this hypervisibility, and the visual art in *Blackheart 2* best demonstrates the artistic undermin-

ing of this enhanced visibility. Included at the center of *The Prison Issue* are four graphic drawings by Armando Alleyne. These pieces of graphic art are significant contributions to the volume, as they make visual the experiences of incarceration. Much of Alleyne's more recent work is made up of painted portraits of important historical figures. The early artworks included in the volume are quite distinct. Each piece consists of stark black-and-white images drawn over by thick stroke marks with few discernible figures. The longer one stares at the images, the more images emerge, but one is never quite certain what one is seeing. The first drawing is, perhaps, the most comprehensible. In it one can make out a hand holding a knife in the upper-left quadrant, the wheels for some vehicle in the foreground, a figure hanging from an extended cord in the right-hand side, and windows of a building in the upper-right quadrant. In the midst of all of these images and taking up a large portion of the central frame is a figure whose hands are coming through lines that look like bars and who has the number 11171 on the left collar.²⁹ Although this male figure dominates the piece, the integrity of his body is obscured by the mix of objects as well as the dark lines that intersect his physical form. The lines that constitute the bars look more like a fence or a tree at other points. If the figure is standing behind bars, Alleyne's drawing appears to offer us a peak "behind the scenes." However, the world behind the bars is not a presentation of cells, queues of prisoners, exercise yards, or food halls. It is a visually cacophonous mixture of images of violence, death, and halted movement. The figure's body disappears into the lines and brush strokes that overpopulate the frame. One could read this chaos as a metaphor for the social confusion within the space of detention and the page's oversaturation with dark ink as an analogy for prisons being filled with people of color. These ideas are crucial to Alleyne's representation of prison. I also think that Alleyne's decision to cloak or conceal the figure's body beneath the intersecting lines and other images reflects a strategy of refusing visibility.

Alleyne's graphic drawing presents a disordering of the queer hypervisibility that the written pieces in the volume highlight. This particular method is a direct response to the notion of imprisoned visibility. He counteracts layered visibility with layers of obscuring darkness, directing us away from visibility. He hides and suggests, questioning the demand for exhibitionist showing. He responds to the forced visibility by reproducing an imprisoned subject that is not discernible, that is obscured. Few points of reference are in the drawing, as in the others in the series. The images that can be detected seem to have little relation to each other, and all are veiled because of the muddled technique. However, a specific method undergirds the visual dis-

order. Throughout the collection of paintings, a simultaneous showing and obscuring are meant to parallel and offset prison's ability to both hide and make visible the bodies of the incarcerated.

The paradoxical effort both to obscure and show that defines the graphics along with the drawings' resemblance to silhouettes connects Alleyne's early 1980s art to Kara Walker's late 1990s work in silhouettes, such as *The End of Uncle Tom and the Grand Allegorical Tableau of Eva in Heaven*. Outside of the visual resonance (black figuration on a white background), I contend that a conceptual connection links Walker and Alleyne. Both try to visualize the mechanisms of their chosen institutions: enslavement and prison, respectively. In her art, Walker illuminates what is in slavery's shadow, that which the institution and its historiography hide: sexual abuse, unexpected eroticisms, and the extensive pleasure found in pain and in the sadomasochistic parameters of forced labor. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw understands this shadow primarily in psychoanalytic terms: as expressing the collective unconscious that houses the "unknowable trauma of slavery."³⁰ This unconscious is let loose in Walker's life-sized panels so that the viewer can see the unspeakable. As auction blocks and whipping posts illustrate, enslavement makes those in bondage publicly visible, but enslavement often obscures the subtler ways it operates on emotional and psychosocial levels. The writings of Nell Irvin Painter and Saidiya Hartman reveal such subtle violence; similarly, Walker's visual project is one of making visible that which is not seen.³¹ Although he works in a black-and-white palette, Alleyne does not offer silhouettes. His series exposes institutional dynamics but in a different way from Walker. Alleyne captures on the page *prison's shadow*, the dark world that lies beneath legislated punishment. The viewer sees prison bars; scrawled, linear marks that suggest the counting of days; and a kneeling figure with a long hose-like apparatus extending from his mouth, which resonates with the sadomasochism of Walker's silhouettes. These are signs of violence, death, punishment, and forced feedings. However, Alleyne's showing is an obscured showing; he refuses a full presentation of incarcerated bodies. His strategy refutes the ordering logic of incarceration that endeavors to make one visible so that one can be controlled. He intimates some of the nightmarish ways in which punishment is experienced but is reluctant to detail legibly. Instead, the viewer finds swirls of blackness and jumbled-together images. He acknowledges that prisons operate by making visible the bodies and minds of the inmates. In response, he gives us a peek into official and unofficial mechanisms for punishment that constitute imprisonment.

Alleyne's paintings, which show and obscure, reveal a contradictory tension at the heart of the volume. The editors want to share the voices and

experiences of gay men in prison, making them appear from behind the walls of detention; paradoxically, they also want to push against the forceful showing of the queer body that occurs within those walls. The editors expose the hidden while refusing certain kinds of violent showing. The only method available for dealing with the problem of queer, layered visibility is one that is itself multilayered and contradictory. In other contexts, I have explored how the refusal of mimetic reflection and realistic representation is a form of abstraction and a method for queer representation.³² Thus, Alleyne's obscuring while showing within the pages of a volume of Black gay writing might be thought of as a queer method or an artistic strategy that derives from considering the defining features of queer identity and experience.

The artistic refusal of visibility is a reaction to the hypervisibility of the queer inmate, of the official and unofficial attention given to their bodies and movements. Given the connection between visibility and vulnerability, some prison sites have instituted special protective custody housing for queer men and those who might face sexual assault. In her study of such spaces, criminal-justice scholar Leanne Fiftal Alarid shows how the men in protected spaces generally feel safer than they would in general-population housing.³³ Although these units are not without their own social pressures, there is much less coercive sex and humiliation based on gender expression and sexual desire. However, legal theorist Russell Robinson indicates how the spatial separation of queer inmates can complicate their lives further.³⁴ Often, these men must qualify for a move to the protective units by appearing nonnormative to staff, publicly expressing their identities, and answering questions that illustrate their knowledge of queer subcultures. Anyone who does not fit into the administration's preconceived notions is unable to have access to this official protection. This technique of being identified officially reinforces the visibility of the occupants by spatially segregating them as well as having them wear different-color uniforms—powder blue instead of navy blue. Within the logic of this policy, queerness means discernible, visible difference, which is why the men who do not clearly conform to expectations remain in general-population housing. This policy of protection perpetuates queerness as visual and broadcasts it as vulnerability. Robinson goes further in questioning whether the policy is intended to protect queer inmates and suggests that it could do more harm than good because it is unevenly effective. Administratively controlled, segregated spaces—even with the best intentions—cannot be understood as either safe or endangering.³⁵ They can be places of safety as Alarid claims, but they may also become a means for further disciplining, through official and unofficial avenues, queer bodies whether inside or outside of the protected unit, as Robinson

suggests. Segregated spaces for imprisoned queer men protect and endanger precisely because of the hypervisibility of the Black queer body. The spaces do not resolve the problem of queer visibility; they depend on and enhance the ethical dilemmas such visibility evokes.

Robinson's study "Masculinity as Prison" turns to the experiences that queer men have in prison and seeks to understand the limits of policy making (in hopes of encouraging policy reform). I wonder if there is a clear path or policy solution to what I have identified as an ideological dilemma. A prison is a space in which privacy is given up at intake. There is no right to privacy. Given how homophobia informs popular culture, excessive amounts of attention are always paid to nonnormative bodies, and destructive attention is enhanced within the homosocial spaces of detention. Legal theorist Dean Spade questions whether any real reform of prisons is possible; he wonders about the "fruitlessness of seeking safety at the hands of the most significant perpetrators of racialized gendered violence" (195). The contributors to *Blackheart 2* help us to recognize a vulnerability that is born outside the walls of prisons but that is exacerbated because of how prisons function. Spade makes a good point in exploring the inherent problems with prisons, but the problem is larger than prisons. Spaces of incarceration actually depend upon and divulge layered visibility, which follows queer bodies through all spaces. The ultimate goal in this chapter is to show what art can teach about social and affective dynamics within prisons. The neglected *Blackheart 2* puts forward ideas that would not fully find their way into the scholarly realm until decades later. The method of tracking the (dramatic) increase in numbers of prison inmates is important; it is vital work that must be done to understand how the criminal-justice system operates along a racism-informed axis. Such quantitative-focused methods may not reveal enough about the lived experience of local and federal detention, about the different kinds of interactions between and among inmates, or about the social dynamics that aid and abet the state power behind arrest and conviction rates.

The *Blackheart 2* selections teach the reader that the space of prison permeates the body. One does not move through it; it invades a body, especially if one is already marginalized. Prison erases the possibility of any privacy, not only because spaces and actions normally thought of as being nonpublic (bedrooms, sexual intercourse, sleeping, defecating, etc.) are on view but also because of the constant physical and psychological invasions. Being out about one's sexual identity outside the walls of prison becomes politically and socially attractive for many around the time of the publication of the prison volume. Nevertheless, the writers and editors illuminate that being out (or even closeted for that matter) affords the queer subject no benefits

within a physical environment that demands visibility and constant access to one's mind and body. Is there space for interiority at all within this world of detention? The political capital attributed to queer visibility is evacuated of any meaning or at least fails to obtain. This contention makes clear that queer visibility is uneven in its effectiveness. It is sometimes useful and sometimes not. The lack of its usefulness within detention identifies its possible limits in the world beyond those walls. One is left with this question: how might the imprisoned gay man deal with the dilemma of visibility? Even though Spade may argue for the end of prisons and encourage us to think about ways to keep queer and gender-nonnormative men out of prison, what about those who are there right now and trying to negotiate that layered visibility? How have they made it through, and how do they continue to do so? These questions and several others are taken up later to consider some ways racialized gender violence gets navigated. The complex environment of incarceration creates a special vulnerability for its inhabitants, but it can also become a mechanism for undoing the creation of injury.

If one takes seriously the social construction of layered visibility, how might we not always think of the queer subject as marginalized and with compromised agency? Does the process of incarceration ensure the reality of remarginalization? Is it possible to recognize vulnerability without reinscribing the category of victim as an absolute? These concerns are addressed by examining the emergence of an empowering desire in *Memoir: Delaware County Prison*, Reginald Hall's twenty-first-century prison memoir. In 2004 Hall published *Delaware County Prison*, through a self-publishing press, about his eight-month sentence; the text explores the experience of being an out-gay man in prison. In illuminating the process of moving through the criminal-justice system, Hall reveals the kind of threats that gay men can face in prison, elaborating the ideas that appear in the Blackheart Collective issue two decades before. Hall links Black queer visibility to vulnerability; however, he claims a power and freedom for himself through same-sex desire. This piece of life writing offers Hall's memories of his incarceration, but he changes names and alters characters and situations to shield identities. He begins drafting the book while in prison but writes most of it after he has been released. He creates a figure who navigates the confusing space of prison through desire to move toward literal and figurative freedom. Desire becomes his mechanism for articulating interiority and keeping himself from being concealed and suffocated by incarceration.

It is important to consider carefully the question of genre when trying to make sense of Hall's text. Hall titles his work a "memoir," and he wants the reader to understand the account as an accurate retelling of his experiences

during his incarceration. However, it is crucial to investigate the nature of the representation that he provides of himself, his life, and jail. In her impressive work on Black women's autobiography, Angela Ards explains, "Life writing is about crafting a persona, selecting and shaping incidents of one's life to articulate an ethic about how to move in the world, and then finding narrative strategies to represent that worldview on the page."³⁶ Rather than thinking about Hall's text as an account that simply documents his interactions in jail, one must recognize how he creates a defiant persona who must develop a method for existing in the space of incarceration in a way that undermines popular conceptions of imprisonment. This discussion sheds light on the narrative and rhetorical strategies he employs to make this persona visible and free from incarceration and from stereotypes about gay men. Throughout the discussion, Hall the writer is distinguished from the persona Reginald (nicknamed "Reg"). Whether or not the specific course of events happens as they do is less important than reckoning with the Black gay individual that Hall constructs. Even if the author does insist that the book consists of truth claims or that he is showing a verifiable account matters less than understanding the kind of subject he imagines and the narrative he wants the reader to glean from the memoir. Hall presents a persona who navigates the confusing space of prison through queer desire to transition from a space of enclosure to one of free movement.

Memoir is not the only lens through which one should understand Hall's book. The emphasis on Black same-sex desire in the context of urban life makes the text resonate with the genre of gay urban romance fiction that begins to emerge in the 1990s and 2000s. Perhaps, the best example of this genre is James Earl Hardy's 1994 debut novel, *B-Boy Blues*, which follows the developing relationship between two Black men, Mitchell Crawford and Raheim Rivers. In the memoir, Reginald finishes reading Hardy's novel near the end of his jail time. Hall's memoir replicates the generic qualities and motifs of this novel and romance fiction, in general: unrequited desire, heartbreak, overcoming obstacles, emotional confrontations, a series of conflicts that end in sexual encounters, and self-love as a means to fulfillment. The first piece of reading that Reg has at his disposal is Terry McMillan's 1992 novel, *Waiting to Exhale*, a novel that explores many of these motifs.³⁷ In addition to being an example of life writing, *Delaware County Prison* is a love story or, more specifically, the story of a series of infatuations that the persona has in jail. Hall actively borrows from writers such as Hardy and to a lesser extent McMillan in characterizing Black masculinity and the romantic entanglements in which Black men may find themselves. If memoir, as Ards

asserts, is about articulating “an ethic about how to move in the world” (17), Hall situates same-sex desire (and romantic entanglements) as a viable and valuable ethic and empowers Reg through it. In addition, Hall emphasizes the place (and visibility) of desire within spaces of constriction.

Reg’s feelings of visibility become immediately apparent in the memoir. All of his actions, including those as innocuous as walking, lead to unwanted attention: “I hated walking through the block, hearing everyone call me names, like ‘faggot boy’ or ‘gay blade’ [flamboyant or effeminate gay man]” (35). The simple act of walking through the unit toward his cell results in degrading epithets, comments on his perceived sexuality, and public acknowledgments of his susceptibility to abuse.³⁸ There is excessive commenting on his body and constant suggestions of a threat of possible violence. He later comments that he was always “the talk of the jail” (105). Recalling the writers from the *GCN* and *Blackheart 2*, Hall suggests that his central figure feels especially visible, and this visibility gets linked to conditions of vulnerability. His visibility has to do with the exact nature of prison. Because it is a homosocial space, the anxiety about homosexual encounters is especially high. The monitoring of behaviors and cues that could suggest same-sex sexual activity is widespread. That being said, there is another attribute of the Delaware County jail, specifically, that contributes to the kind of visibility that Reg faces. Reg mentions that he regularly recognizes other young men from his neighborhood as well as his elementary school and high school (19, 131, 137). These moments of recognition make manifest the concept of the school-to-prison pipeline, a dominant analytical framework within twenty-first-century prison studies and critical race theory.³⁹ The population of the prison re-creates or reconstitutes the (male) population of his schools. It is as if there is one easy path from the classroom to the jail cell in that one and one’s compatriots move almost seamlessly from one location to the other. This reality makes the space of incarceration uncanny in that it may always be both familiar and unfamiliar. The fact that so many individuals are already familiar with Reg means that many have preconceptions about him, his ways of interacting socially, and his sexual orientation. The reason that the question of his sexuality was always the “number 1 question” has to do not only with his mannerisms and habits but also with comments made about him from others who knew him or knew of him on the outside. One social product of the school-to-prison pipeline is that antagonisms that were present in the cafeteria or at the bus stop can find their way to the floor of a cell or a prison yard. The fact that Reg was already known by some of the inmates made him more visible in some ways—at times resulting in connections and other times resulting in

aggressions. It is not just that schools can function as pre-prisons under the clarifying school-to-prisons pipeline paradigm, but prisons can replicate and reconfigure school- and neighborhood-derived dynamics.

Hall's descriptions of Reg's time in jail and the ways he negotiates the space of incarceration are important because they undermine familiar conceptions of Black masculinity. Hall's text questions the idea of the cool pose as a dominant affective defense mechanism for Black males dealing with the social world. Richard Majors and Janet Billson define the "cool pose" as a survival strategy for Black males: "Coolness means poise under pressure and the ability to maintain detachment, even during tense encounters. Being cool invigorates a life that would otherwise be degrading and empty. [. . .] Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control."⁴⁰ The cool-pose idea describes a particular control of emotional reaction and gesture as a way to protect oneself in different environments. It resonates with and takes its energy from the circulating idea that "real" men do not cry or show emotion because to do so is a sign of weakness; from this perspective, keeping cool becomes a racial *and* gender imperative. It names an attempt to exercise control over the body in conditions in which one may lack control; one gains a sense of security through this pose and (re)constitutes masculinity. It serves as a response to hypervisibility and enhanced vulnerability. Herman Beavers and Kevin Quashie have both explored the critical value of quiescence, an embodied cool and quiet, in African American literary culture.⁴¹ These discussions allow us to understand such formations of masculine cool not simply as reactive or reactionary mechanisms but, rather, as purposeful attempts to cultivate interiority and present novel or unexpected expressions of identity. The cool pose is a way of reading Black masculinity and a culturally specific strategy for self-definition.

In sharing specific elements of Reg's experiences of aggression and antagonism, Hall's text explores the viability of this mode of being. The text offers the following questions: To what extent does the cool pose apply to Black queer men? Under what conditions might the queer experience make known the limitations of this way of being within the world? The concept of the "pose" implies a kind of stationary stability and control of movement. To pose suggests bodily integrity, mastery over one's body and emotions, and the ability to station oneself as one sees fit. These elements of control are precisely what Reg lacks throughout his time in the jail. He is in constant motion throughout the memoir. Unable to stay still, he moves from intake to E-block to pre-release to F-block to B-Block and finally back to pre-release

and freedom. These moves make evident his inability to control his circumstances while in jail. For example, he is taken from pre-release and returned to detention in F-block for using the telephone to call home when he is not supposed to do so (128). He is moved to B-Block after nearly being assaulted. Reg is in constant motion throughout the narrative, but it is not necessarily motion that we think of in terms of agency, like the kind of movement that Verlia demonstrates in *In Another Place, Not Here*. Hall's narrative presents what we might think of as *detained itinerancy*. He is moved around the space of custody; his highly controlled movement intensifies his experience of confinement by evacuating movement of its connotations of freedom and restructuring it as a series of actions that secure captivity.

One may begin to wonder how Hall imagines mustering composure when one is in compelled constant physical and emotional motion, when one is surrounded by forces that appear unexpectedly to redirect one's path and control one's body. The reader finds that Reg is unable to present or maintain the cool pose, theorized as a familiar defense mechanism. There are several reasons that Reg is in constant motion. First, as suggested above, he cannot find safe space(s) in prison. Second, the vicissitudes of the criminal-justice system mean that one can never be certain about one's place or one's future. His exact charges are kept from him initially, and he is unable to contact his parole officer, which leaves him without information and nearly helpless. Third, he makes mistakes or errors in judgment that throw his life in chaos, as when he uses the phone and is delayed in getting out of jail. In all instances, Reg often becomes emotional: he cries, prays, and even contemplates suicide at one point. The narrative does not present an individual who dons the cool pose in the face of such harsh realities.

The cool-pose concept is arguably the precursor for Rashad Shabazz's idea of "the grammar of masculinity," which he develops in discussing how Black men cultivate a new sense of self in prison that is rooted in concepts of discipline and restraint (87). It is a reaction to the chaos of prison and the expectation that Black men lack these characteristics, which—from the perspective of the administration—perhaps, explains why they are in prison. In Shabazz's consideration, this grammar is primarily the result of the strong influence of Islam on incarcerated Black masculinity, but the basic idea is consonant with the cool pose: Black men develop a persona or expression of restraint and control in the context of aggression and social pressure. The grammar of masculinity is an incarcerated version of the cool pose.

However, Reg's inability or refusal to illustrate the cool pose or model the grammar of Black masculinity encourages us to think more about how queer positionality might apply pressure to how we think about these concepts.

Does the existing grammar of Black masculinity account for queerness? Is the Black queer body figuratively ungrammatical? It is not the case that there is no systematic way to read or make sense of Black queer men. Rather, Black queer masculinities often worry the grammars or frames of reference that we have developed for reading the Black male body. Reg's experiences compel us to think about other means for dealing with anxiety and oppression, means that run parallel to the cool pose. Reg's response to his situation in prison is not restraint or discipline; it is sexual desire—messy, overweening, disordering desire for other men in prison. Hall's narrative response to the unrelenting control of Reg's movement is the constant movement of his many paths of desire. Because he cannot move freely, he desires widely, effecting his own kind of queer movement. Hall replaces a cool pose with an impassioned set of yearnings. Reg is not unaffected by his surroundings, but he does not respond in the way that cultural theorists might predict.

Considering the desire of queer men in prison leads us to think about the sexual dynamics that might prevail within incarcerated spaces. There may be no more common stereotype about prison, especially male prisons, in the US cultural imagination than the threat of forced sexual activity. It is a recurring trope within popular culture and comedy routines from crude jokes about “not dropping the soap” to Eddie Murphy's infamous albums and film recordings and Aaron McGruder's 2010 “A Date with the Booty Warrior” episode in his television series *The Boondocks*.⁴² There is increased attention to prison rape in the political and legal sphere around the time that Hall is writing. Two significant occurrences involving the issue form the historical backdrop for the publication of Hall's romance-laden memoir: the publication of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report *No Escape: Male Rape in Prison* in 2001 and President George W. Bush's signing of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) into law in 2003. The Human Rights Watch is an international, nongovernment-based human rights organization that investigates abuses, publicizes information about possible rights violations, and pressures officials to respect rights and secure justice.⁴³ The important report of male sexual assault in prison, *No Escape*, is based on a three-year study of more than two hundred inmates and state correction officers in the United States. The report found prison administrators culpable, by failing to institute reasonable measures to prevent and punish rape, for prisoner-on-prisoner sexual abuse in male prisons. This report was one of the major factors that lead to PREA. As Catherine Marcum explains, “PREA addressed the increasing problem of prison rape by creating a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assaults in the correctional system, providing funding for research and programs, and requiring data collection on rape and assault.”⁴⁴ This

piece of legislation brought a significant amount of public attention to the perceived problem of rape in male prisons and stimulated popular discussions of sex in prison. Hall is in jail as the HRW report appears and as the act is being written. His memoir does not deny the reality of rape in prison to which the report and act point, but his memoir questions the inevitability of it; he casts aspersions on the idea of there being “no escape” from rape. The text shifts the conversation from sexual abuse, which dominates legal and activist discourse, to sexual desire in rendering the experience of Reg’s incarceration. It does not present prison as a space of sexual abuse primarily, offering, instead, an understanding of prison as multidimensional. Through its concentration on desire, Hall’s text departs from the social script that the legal and activist documents reveal and perpetuate.

The threat of rape does surface in the text, but Reg is mostly able to avoid any unwanted sexual encounter. Highlighting the idea of the possibility of rape, he shares one of his first realizations about incarceration after going through intake: “I would be helpless in there, and I had no intention of getting fucked in the shower” (22). As time passed, he continued be anxious about taking a shower (38). Upon entering the jail, one of his first concerns pertains to the possibility of rape especially because he is young, gay, and femme-leaning. However, that concern does not prevail as the narrative develops. Reg feels in two moments as if he is on the verge of facing physical assault and sexual violation, but in both instances, he eludes sexual violence and ensures a different level of protection for himself. In the first, he is able to run away and get back to his own cell. He reports the attempt to the guard. The administrators act on the report and threaten to lock down the entire unit, which would entail the collective loss of any privileges and everyone having to stay in their cells for an extended period of time. Other inmates come to him to ask him to withdraw the complaint so that the lockdown does not happen, and he gives in. The fact that such social pressure might keep someone from reporting an assault or an attempted assault indicates the possible limits of PREA effecting change. Everyone ends up apologizing to Reg. He even starts to get treated differently: “All of a sudden everyone was being nice to me” (51). Curiously, immediately afterward, Reg is invited to the shower (for mutually consented sexual activity), but he declines because the guy is not his “type”; however, he does deign to kiss the would-be suitor. In the first reference to sexual violence, consensual queer intimacy appears in proximity to the prospect of queer violence. He refuses to allow his narrative to concentrate solely on violence.

Tysean, Reg’s cellmate, perpetrates the second attempt in their jail cell, reinforcing the idea that even one’s cell cannot be seen as a safe or private

space. Tysean approaches Reg, tears off his boxers, and holds him down. Reg begins to cry, and that emotional reaction has an effect upon Tysean. He leaves without hurting Reg further, but there is no clear reason why. Tysean is later sent to the hole, or solitary confinement, because Reg does alert the authorities about the attempted rape.⁴⁵ The administration initially wants to put Reg in protective custody, but he does not want to go there. He is told that he cannot stay on F-Block because Tysean's friends might come after him, so he is moved to a different unit, B-Block. The threat is real, but Reg is able to avoid sexual violence. His informing to the guards works to his advantage and offers him an unexpected power over the lives of violent inmates. Reg's story is not one of serial rape as one might suppose given its focus on a femme-leaning gay man (a "gay blade") in prison. The memoir is not the story we might expect to encounter—the protagonist himself expresses concerns about what his experience might be based on his expectations about being an incarcerated gay man. One could make the argument that had Hall been in jail longer than eight months or had he been in a maximum security or federal prison, the accounts of escape might not be possible. However, I think that assessment misses the point of the memoir as well as the point of the discussion here. The question of whether or not Hall, the author, experienced sexual violence while in jail is immaterial. He creates a narrative through the memoir in which such physical violence is basically absent—whether or not the author was actually able to avoid violence.⁴⁶ I see his goal as (re)creating a persona that is able to escape such violence, secure a space for himself, and disrupt the construction of vulnerability. He refuses to create a narrative dominated by the concept of "no escape," which provides the foundation for the HRW report on rape in prison.⁴⁷ I emphasize the kind of figure that Hall sketches in his account: a young man in search of pleasure and not one in constant danger. The author acknowledges the reality of vulnerability, but he does not rest there.

Instead of presenting a narrative of sexual vulnerability, Hall offers one of sexual excitement and desire. From Reg's viewpoint, the prison is brimming with possible circuits of desire that titillate him to the point of exhaustion. That being said, he only has sex one time within the memoir. *Delaware County Prison* does not lapse into a stereotype about gay male promiscuity. It is not an account of uncontrolled sex; rather, it is a tracing out of desire and attraction in a space where such attraction is verboten. The text is less about sex acts—we see very few of them—and more about the expression of desire as a route to self-definition and freedom within restriction. The idea of consensual sex in prison is restricted in terms of policy and often ignored in terms of scholarship, as Kristine Levan explains.⁴⁸ This memoir of incarceration is

about queer desire and not about sexual abuse—or sex at all for that matter. I have purposefully chosen to delay talking about rape in this chapter on gay men in prison. This issue might dominate the popular imagination, but it is not the primary issue that gay men themselves necessarily bring up in the documentation of their experiences. Knight metaphorically references it in his poem, which opens this chapter, but none of the gay writers included in *Blackheart 2* spend time talking about it. Again, whether or not it actually forms a component of their experiences, rape is not offered up as a defining element of Black queer imprisonment in these accounts. The strategy works against the public showing and actions that make the Black queer body hypervisible. Instead, the visibility of the Black queer body becomes prominent in the 1984 *Blackheart 2* volume, and Hall recognizes this same visibility and counters it by making queer desire the most prominent (or visible) component of his narrative. Hall identifies the reality of the threat of violence but consistently claims for himself a desire that disrupts the conditions of physical and emotional vulnerability; he asserts a disordering desire.

The experience of reading *Delaware County Prison* is one of following a series of crushes that Reg has: J-Rock, Ron, Teddy, Nasir, Cash, A. J., Barry, and Anthony, among a number of others who get passing reference for being cute, having a nice hair texture, or a nice complexion.⁴⁹ The movement through the spatial structures of jail is reimagined as a movement from one object of desire to another. I read this assertion of desire as a response to his perceived vulnerability and the feeling of lacking control over his circumstances. Reg declares that everyone “seemed to be [his] enemy” (27), but then he immediately shifts to talk about how much attention he has been paying to several of the men and that he effectively had competing crushes. The narrative transitions rapidly from talking about his isolation to talking about his romantic infatuations. His desire is not only a refuge from feelings of loneliness and helplessness. Rhetorically, it supplants and symbolically undermines such feelings. The structure of the memoir refuses to let injury dominate the text by consistently turning to the expression of desire. Later in the narrative, when he first takes notice of a light-complexioned inmate named Nasir, Reg asserts, “I did not need to be out of jail, those pink lips could set me free” (67). Of course, Reg is easily smitten and might be thought of as a “boy-crazy” eighteen-year-old, but this moment also demonstrates how Hall attributes a serious power to intimacy. His narrative is about desire and identity, not sexual violence or sex acts. Hall presents a story that details the fact of sexual vulnerability, but he foregrounds his own sexual desire and deemphasizes the idea that sexual vulnerability must obtain in a story about incarcerated Black male life.

Although he attributes power to desire, not all of the queer men in the jail have experiences that mirror those of the protagonist of *Delaware County Prison*. Queer men are unevenly visible or experience hypervisibility in uneven ways. The descriptions of Lamont, a gay inmate who becomes Reg's roommate and friend, demonstrates this dynamic. Reg describes Lamont as "extremely feminine" (148), and the two become important sources of support for each other. Whereas, Reg finds himself getting multiple "admirers," Lamont, who is often called "ugly," increasingly has hostile encounters: "It seemed like Lamont was the most hated person on the block. He couldn't even get a haircut without a hassle" (155). This treatment of Lamont reflects an expression of hostility that can vary greatly; moreover, it alerts the reader to the fact that everyone does not experience homophobia and femmephobia in the same way. In the context of multiple queer men, there can be a hierarchy that refracts the direction and intensity of anti-queer sentiment. One of the other results of the distinction made between Reg and Lamont is the rhetorical presentation of Reg as special and exceptional. He attracts attention as no one else does. In a letter written to him and included in the memoir, one admirer, A. J., "Daddy Thug," claims, "I'm just sitting here thinking about how I never felt this way for another dude. You have something special about you" (163). As the letter along with many other comments from the memoir demonstrates, queer desire is the primary mechanism for the construction of Reg's singularity. Much of the narrative concerns presenting the lead figure as the center of many circuits of desire, while also reminding us that other queer men do not enjoy such privilege.

The narrative purpose of the concerted effort Hall makes to present Reg as special is to counter the other major feature of Reg's experience in jail: his helplessness. From beginning to end, Hall documents Reg's inability to control his circumstances and make progress toward release. Often, when he thinks he is about to get out, as when he is in pre-release, he is sent back to the block. Hall emphasizes Reg's powerlessness in the context of incarceration. Hall offers a dual presentation of the persona he crafts: one who is vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the criminal-justice system *and* one who is empowered and experiences self-realization through queer desire. The series of crushes and Reg's rhetorical singularity are strategies for undermining through writing the familiar, popular conception of the incarcerated Black body as an object rather than a subject, as socially dead rather than dynamic, vital, and developing. He is deprived of his family and home but is not bereft of community. Hall does not deny the reality of the kind of alienation and objectification that are part-and-parcel of incarceration; nevertheless, he refuses to allow his narrative to consist solely of that line

of thought. Queer desire cannot undo those realities, nor does it rise above perpetuating stereotypical understandings of gender expression necessarily. That being said, queer desire helps Reg to get through jail and suggests the possibility of resilience in the face of his particular vulnerability. Queer desire can become a mechanism for negotiating realities of discrimination within institutional spaces even if it cannot extirpate them. Two key results of this narrative construction link together the ideas presented in this chapter: that individuals are differently visible, even those that seem to share similar positionalities and, informing the first, that prisons and jails are not experienced as homogenous spaces. We must not assume that prison, with its multiple gazes and official and unofficial arbiters of punishment, creates uniform experiences for the bodies in them.

This chapter closes by turning attention to an absent figure in this discussion of Black gay men in prison: HIV/AIDS. There is no reference to AIDS in Hall's memoir. The closest reference the reader finds occurs when Reg is describing the sexual activity that Lamont participates in: "I was in love and Lamont was in love, although he would get dick on a normal basis. [. . .] He'd kept himself clean by squeezing water from the baby oil bottle up his anus. I didn't think I could handle that; having sex without a condom behind these walls was bad enough, but all that cum Lamont had stuffed up his butt was more than I could take" (151). This mention of condom-less sex is the nearest that Hall comes to acknowledging the reality of AIDS and the possibility of being exposed to the virus, and it is made only in relation to Lamont. When Reg finally has sexual intercourse with Anthony, there is no reference to condoms at all: "I put the head of his dick between my lips and massaged it with my tongue. [. . .] He stood up and leaned on the bed; he climbed on, and before I knew it he was in me, pumping harder and harder in and out" (172). Most prisons refuse to make condoms available by policy, and Reg mentions the absence of condoms when talking about Lamont. The mention of protection only comes up in reference to his friend who is being ejaculated into. Reg displaces any anxiety he may have about disease contraction obliquely onto his friend and concentrates on the pleasure and adventure of the sexual encounter. This displacement reinforces the rhetorical presentation of Reg as special and the way the narrative itself makes different figures (here, Reg and Lamont) visible unevenly.

The reluctance to talk about HIV/AIDS ostensibly places the text in contradistinction to contemporary critical discussions that highlight a connection between Black male incarceration and HIV/AIDS. Shabazz argues that prisons "did not create HIV/AIDS; instead, they exacerbated the epidemic by providing a safe place for the disease to incubate, to remain untreated, and

in some cases to spread among the prison population” (99). He goes on to explain how in Chicago, returning prisoners had sex with people in their immediate neighborhood, contributing to expanding rates of the disease in the city—he notes specific zip codes in which high rates of HIV infection parallel high rates of incarceration, forming a veritable “ghost map” of infection rates (102). Such spreading means that there is little distinction between neighborhoods or domestic spaces and spaces of detention in terms of serostatus and health access. Given the fact that “the risk of transmission of HIV is fourteen times higher in prison” and the popular concerns about sexually transmitted diseases in the context of rape,⁵⁰ what might we make of Hall’s decision not to reference AIDS? Even though Hall’s text does not follow the logic that Shabazz’s text exposes, the geographer’s work helps us to make sense of the memoirist’s narrative choices. Shabazz concludes his discussion of infection rates, incarceration, and recidivism by asserting, “Sex is not what produces HIV/AIDS; rather poverty, instability, and containment are” (113). *Delaware County Prison* is a piece of life writing that advances an argument about the power of sexual desire. Hall refuses to link desire, which permeates almost every page of the story, to historical rates of infection. He decouples queer desire from HIV/AIDS. The threat and existence of the virus only emerges indirectly through the reference to condoms. The mention of condoms has more to do with insufficient access to health care and health management than to same-sex intimacy.⁵¹ Hall effectively supports Shabazz’s contention by refusing to allow his narrative to be about AIDS and infection directly. It focuses on imagining a path to freedom told through the framework of desire and pleasure. The jail, as a space of containment, may expedite the spread of infection rates, but Hall endeavors to tell a story about the negotiations of a state of vulnerability, and for him, that has little to do with the realities of health outcomes in some incarcerated spaces and has little relevance to his own serostatus.

I have made the argument that Hall uses desire as a way to have his persona negotiate the space on incarceration. Black male composure is reimagined as same-sex yearning through the queer lens of the text. Such desire itself may not dismantle spaces of incarceration, but it does disorder the dominant ways of thinking that govern it and offers to the queer subject a means of pleasure and self-expression. Desire is not his only path to freedom. Reg begins writing while in prison as a response to his situation and his feelings of frustration. Art becomes his way of dealing with institutional constraint and destructive public perceptions of him; his goal is to expose how the institution works and to reveal ways to undermine it. He loves *and* writes his way to freedom and presents a queer way of being in the space of detention. Desire in this

context becomes an elaboration of what Elizabeth Alexander calls “the black interior”: “inner space which black artists have found selves that go far, far beyond the limited expectations of what black is, isn’t, or should be.”⁵² Hall’s text, much like Alleyne’s drawings, tries to imagine a space for Blackness that exceeds the specific kinds of racialized limitations of incarceration that Williamson and others document. These cultural producers argue for and imagine creatively “black interiority” as a spatialized rejection of hypervisibility. If prisons attempt to make public Black interiority, writers such as Hall and those who precede him seek to make public the hidden dynamics of incarceration and protect the integrity of Black queer interiority and the value of same-sex desire. With their different projects, these queer artists imagine a way out and a way through the unpredictable wilderness of institutional confinement. The next chapter considers how institutional power can move outside of the actual space of a building and how queer writers negotiate this externalization of institutional control.

4. THE SHADOW OF INSTITUTIONS

Medical Diagnosis and the Elusive Queer Body

I am not only a casualty, I am also a warrior.

—Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*

Medical records document facts about one's body and mind, and in doing so, they define who we are. Records are instruments that expand the reach of institutional power in terms of space (as documents circulate among different locations) and time (as documents are archived). In tracking an anxiety about medical records and diagnoses in the work of Black diasporic writers, I argue that writers create *autopoietic narratives*, which are accounts concerned with self-definition and desire and that refuse the idea of being controlled by institutional force. These narratives distance Black queer characters from their records and create a life apart from the fixing gaze of medical establishment and its instruments. Medical abuses against minorities, such as experiments during enslavement, involuntary sterilizations of women of color, and forced institutionalization of political activists, illustrate how medical institutions have participated in racial discrimination and social inequality and have enabled the exercise of state power.¹ Until 1987 the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), the authoritative volume on psychiatric diagnoses in the United States, classified homosexuality as a mental illness.² Its equivalent used in countries in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa, the *International Classification of Disease*, did so until 1992.³ What appears to be treatment or mere medical documentation can function as a form of social control. Diagnosis does not just identify a health issue for treatment; in the context of social vulnerability of racial and sexual minorities, it also extends the reach of institutions'

power by enabling their ability to control individuals outside of the physical parameters of treatment and into the social world.

In my assessment, autopoietic narratives serve as artistic responses to the medical establishment's ability to delimit personhood. Chapter 1 references *autopoiesis* in discussing poetic projects about spatial justice, but this chapter returns to the concept to characterize the development of narrative strategies. These autopoietic narratives counter outside interpretation of identity and contest injury by asserting an oppositional identity. Such narratives free Black queer identity from the confines of the medical record and encourage a queer interiority defined outside of and against diagnosis. This analysis begins with a discussion of South African writer K. Sello Duiker's novel *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) to illustrate how recasting one's identity and rooting it in queer desire becomes the means for escaping the social stigma of a mental-illness diagnosis.⁴ From there, the discussion turns to Scottish writer Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* (1998) to show how one strategy for coping with the totalizing nature of the medical record is to offer one's own narrative, which can offset the public one and shield the intimate components of one's life.⁵ These authors working in different countries use narrative strategies to cope with the possibility of public defamation and to make possible the shielding of desire. Through their work, one can recognize how self-making through narrative acts is a valuable tool for enduring the physical and emotional impress of institutional power, even if that power is never fully subverted.

In tracking how institutions seek to define to the public who racial and sexual minorities are and what their futures can be, chapter 4 focuses on representations of interactions with medical sites and health-care professionals. If chapter 3 demonstrates how the institutional space of prison attempts to make the body visible within its walls, chapter 4 shows how health-related institutions and their representatives push that visibility outward and (re)define a person through diagnosis and treatment. Though a medical instrument, diagnosis is a tool for social exposure; it allows medical authority to exceed the physical parameters of treatment. The gaze of the guard now transitions to the medical gaze, and the chapter examines how health outcomes define and determine our social lives—whether we like it or not. In the work of Black queer artists, bodies within the spaces of health care sometimes must be reclaimed or even hidden in the shadows to dodge the possibility of injury. The spatial movement of diagnosis actually makes possible violence and increasing public attention to the Black queer body.

Audre Lorde's writing offers an illustration of the defining power of diagnosis and presents a language for evaluating the fiction of Duiker and

Kay, providing a framework for discussing the relationship between medical institutions and injury across the diaspora. In Lorde's powerful volume *The Cancer Journals*, she details her diagnosis of malignant breast cancer and her navigation of the realm of illness as a Black lesbian.⁶ The journal entries and essays explore the traumatizing experience of pain, her attempt to find community, and the difficulties of dealing with medical staff. Many moments in the experimental collection show how diagnosis can result in social injury, humiliation, and manipulation. After having her first mastectomy, she is criticized by a member of the nursing staff for choosing not to wear her breast prosthesis (56). The reasoning is that Lorde's refusal to wear the prosthesis would bring down the "morale" of the other patients. This suggestion angers Lorde, and she rejects this attempt to control her body and shape her worldview. Lorde's diagnosis and treatment bring with them certain expectations about her public performance of illness and identity. In this moment, the doctor's office becomes a space of injury; the reading of her body made her vulnerable to criticism within institutional space. An action as seemingly innocuous as going in for a consultation introduces anxiety. She learns that having breast cancer means living a certain way; her body does not belong to her. It is not just that her body has increased visibility; she must follow a social script, and she must play certain roles. Her medical record has important implications for her public life. Lorde recognizes these efforts to control her body and the expression of identity, and she adamantly refuses them. She claims to be both "casualty" (or injured) and "survivor." She recognizes that she has to deal with the ravages of cancer as well as with some of the constraints the treatment will put on her; however, she insists that she has a right to define herself as she recognizes the reality of her occasional vulnerability. For her, being a survivor means connecting with other women and prioritizing queer desire in her public presentation of her identity. Desire is the root of her status as a survivor. This simultaneous recognition of victim and survivor identities reveals how Lorde argues for freedom in restriction or autonomy and self-definition within institutional protocols and medical expectations. She acknowledges the fact of her imposed vulnerability, but in the same breath she claims for herself self-determination and desire-derived power. Lorde's casualty-warrior construct serves as an important guide for making sense of how Black queer artists describe interactions with health care and the long shadow of diagnosis.

Although it is meant to help determine one's health possibilities and treatment options, diagnosis can shape the contours of one's social life, as Lorde's interactions with the nursing staff suggests. The word *diagnosis* has two dominant meanings: the identification of an illness as well as the precise

characterization of a subject or phenomenon.⁷ In identifying and defining a person's health status, one can also be defining that person. It is the damaging slippage that can occur between illness and the person that is examined here through Duiker's *Quiet Violence of Dreams*. The text, which is set in a South African mental hospital, explores the social complexities of the postapartheid nation and the ongoing dilemmas around cultural and political citizenship.⁸ Much of the narrative action is informed by the protagonist's diagnosis of mental illness. Duiker's protagonist, Tshepo, responds to his diagnosis and the scripting of his identity by using his body to reinvent himself and forge a path through the "new" South Africa. What we learn is that diagnoses follow one across time and space. His diagnosis, that is, the contents of his medical record, sets the course for the narrative and shapes his life inside and outside of the space of treatment. Duiker's narrative explores Tshepo's vulnerability and the way that meaning is projected on his Black queer body, shaping his experience of place. Tshepo's encounters indicate that there is no outside of diagnosis. Diagnosis is a psychological and spatial prison from which the protagonist has trouble freeing himself. The reader finds that one may carry the experience of institutional space into the "free world," underscoring the extension of certain spaces of literal and figurative constraint.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams follows Tshepo as he navigates trauma, violence, and sex through the streets of Cape Town, South Africa. Much of the narrative details Tshepo's experiences in the mental hospital Valkenberg after he has a mental breakdown. The events at Valkenberg frame the narrative and inform all of the experiences that Tshepo has. Valkenberg is a real psychiatric hospital near the University of Cape Town. In the novel, the hospital signifies a site of identity formation and is a metonym for the South African nation-state. His experiences in this institution become the lens through which one can understand all the events in the novel. Duiker was institutionalized in a psychiatric institution after having been expelled from college, so the novel has autobiographical elements. He began the novel not long after being released.⁹ In terms of the historical record of medical institutions in South Africa, there is a dearth of patients' perspectives.¹⁰ The novel addresses the lack of patient voices and offers a fictionalization of such a voice to provide for the public record the patient's perspective on institutionalization. The novel serves a historiographical function through the enterprise of fiction. Duiker's *Quiet Violence* mirrors the work done by Makeda Silvera and Dionne Brand in their respective fictional projects discussed in chapter 2.

In addition to using fiction to address historical silences around health care in South Africa, Duiker offers a unique narrative approach. He does not merely record for the archive a patient's voice: he writes a history from

the perspective of the mad because the protagonist is diagnosed as psychotic. Those diagnosed as “insane” or seen as “crazy” are considered to have perspectives that are likely unreliable. Here, the unreliable character becomes a primary lens for understanding the social world. In her work on the history of mental institutions, Tiffany Fawn Jones insists that it is “a challenge to attempt to write a collective history from the perspective of the mad” (59). What is fascinating about *Quiet Violence* is that Duiker takes up this challenge in the novel and offers a collective story through the perspective of psychosis. He constructs Tshepo’s narrative of madness around and through a number of characters. Although most of the narrative is from Tshepo’s perspective, the actual narrative structure shuttles among a number of other characters: Mmabatho, Zebron, David, Patrick, Akousia, Chris, West, and Sebastian—each section primarily details interactions with Tshepo. He is the character of focus for all of the chapters. The perspectival focus transitions from one character to the next as the reader learns more and more about Tshepo, the social dynamics in Cape Town, and the political situation of South African society. One could read this structure as a way to distance the narrative from the unreliable narrator; however, I see it as a way for the author to move in and out of the space of diagnosed psychosis and to intimate that the character will be able to escape the confines of his diagnosis as the narrative moves across differently named chapters. By not offering a singular narrative with one perspective, Duiker suggests structurally different ways the protagonist might understand his identity, his mental health, and his body.

The historical and cultural contexts for Duiker’s decision to set the narrative in a mental hospital include developments in mental health legislation in South Africa. In 1973 the South African Parliament passed the Mental Health Act. The country had only been established as an independent nation outside of colonial rule in 1961.¹¹ The passage of this piece of legislation by the parliament was in response to what legal and health scholars call a “public panic.”¹² Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, often renowned as the “architect of apartheid,” was stabbed to death by a temporary parliamentary messenger, Demetrio Tsafendas, in 1966. At the trial, the judge Andreis Beyers declared Tsafendas insane; the defendant had also been diagnosed with schizophrenia before this incident.¹³ Remanded to the custody of the state, Tsafendas died in detention decades later. There had also been an earlier attempt on Verwoerd’s life in 1960, when David Pratt fired two shots point-blank range at Verwoerd during a jubilee event in Johannesburg. In light of these events, the inquiring commission that looked into the Tsafendas attack produced a report that declared, “It is probable that the large number of assassinations,

if not the majority, are committed by mentally disordered persons. They are predominantly the ones who could be used to commit murder.”¹⁴ The implication of the report is that the mentally ill could be used as political tools to carry out the goals of groups seeking to attack or undermine the apartheid government. The very founding of the postcolonial nation-state is marked by attacks on apartheid—as both men claimed to be assaulting Verwoerd because of the racist system he represented.¹⁵ In these years, one finds the emergence of circulating discourses about mental illness within the internal logic of the legal and public spheres.

The 1973 act surfaces out of a desire to address public concerns about mental health through legislation. However, because of the attacks on Verwoerd, those with mental illness were imagined as being threats to the social and political system arranging the nation as well as to the nation’s sovereignty. Arguably, the legislation was less about treating illness than keeping those deemed “ill” away from the rest of society because they were social threats. N. Haysome, M. Strous, and L. Vogelmann insist that “the discernible concern to facilitate the identification, capture, and incarceration of the mentally ill found its ideological justification in the notion that confinement constituted ‘treatment.’”¹⁶ The lawmakers imagine confinement itself as the key path to rehabilitation and the way to a healthy and safe nation.¹⁷ Even more troubling, the act was sometimes manipulated for political purposes. Psychiatry researcher Jonathan Kenneth Burns explains how under the protocols of the act, certification as mentally ill

was wide open to abuse—jealousies, vendettas and prejudices often lay behind the certification of so-called “patients” and the withdrawal of their personal liberty. At times, this form of detention was used for political ends to incarcerate and silence individuals or “dissidents.” Once certified, patients had virtually no recourse to assistance from the law, and could languish in hospital, against their will, for weeks or months. Patients had no meaningful right of appeal or representation. Against this backdrop of human rights infringements, psychiatrists were forced to be doctor and gaoler [jailer].¹⁸

The government and state actors conscripted psychiatric and medical assessments at a historical moment when the nation was turning to these ways of knowing to address social problems. Burns points to the possibility of political detention in a mental institution instead of a prison and highlights how the state can serve as the arbiter of health status as it seeks to silence detractors. Along those lines, Jones explains how the Mental Health Act became a way to enhance racial hierarchies and the unfair treatment of Black South Africans. In discussing the use and development of mental institu-

tions, she avers, “The government and those in its employ continued to focus on protecting white men from the ‘evils’ of black insurgence and internal maladies” (135). Mental institutions became a way to detain social radicals without cause. Because such institutions are linked symbolically to prisons in this context, diagnosis can function as a sentencing.

Even if the government was seeking to ensure public welfare with this legislation, strict regulations restricted the public’s knowledge about mental institutions. Section 66a of the act prohibited writing about or producing visual imagery of the conditions of mental institutions, out of fear of false information. This component of the legislation effectively discouraged public discussion of the physical state of or dynamics within mental institutions:

Any person (a) not being a member of the Newspaper Press Union of South Africa, who, without the authority in writing of the Director-General (i) *sketches or photographs or causes to be sketched or photographed any institution, portion of an institution, patient or group of patients, whether within or outside any institution; [. . .]* or (b) who publishes or causes to be published in any manner whatsoever any false information concerning the detention, treatment, behaviour or experience in an institution of any patient or any person who was a patient, or concerning the administration of any institution, [. . .] shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding one thousand rand or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year.¹⁹

The language of the act makes the offense open to interpretation, meaning that it was legally safer not to write about or circulate images of South African mental institutions. Even though being a member of the Press Union appears to grant one access and protections, the government could severely control exactly what was said and printed. The section serves as a way to ensure the government had a tight hold over the dissemination of information about these health institutions. Ostensibly, these clauses are about protecting patient privacy, but they greatly limit journalistic investigations and documentary work about the facilities themselves and medical practices.

This act provides the backdrop for Duiker’s novel. Parliament does unveil an updated mental-health-care act in 2002 more in line with the new South African Constitution and more attentive to patients’ rights, but the 1973 act is still the law of the land as Duiker writes and publishes his novel. He produces his work on the precipice of change while contemplating the attitudes and social realities made possible by the earlier legislation. Having been institutionalized himself, he is acutely aware of the lack of information the public has about mental-health sites. Duiker’s depiction of Tshepo’s experiences

in a mental hospital is informed by the legacies of the act, and his decision to set a major portion of the novel in Valkenberg Hospital, a well-known institution, is a challenge to the protocols of section 66a.²⁰

Perhaps, the most prominent feature of institutionalization at Valkenberg in Duiker's text is the loss of patient privacy. One of the other patients, Zebron, who befriends Tshepo, describes being institutionalized in these terms:

It's like living with an intruder and being scared of moving around. You have no privacy, no sense of security and you're always scared because all your thoughts are not private. When you can't run away in your mind, it's like being banished into nothingness. There's nowhere else to run to, no shelter to take refuge in. When you don't have the privacy of your thoughts you stop respecting life, you begin to see that you are just a scribble of flesh and breath, someone else's toy and amusement. [. . .] That's why you look at people suspiciously. *Because you know that everyone knows your thoughts.* (45; emphasis added)

Being under psychological care can mean little to no physical privacy because one is under observation: there are meetings with psychiatrists, guided movement through the facility, supervised meals, monitored taking of medication at specific times, and shared living space with people that one barely knows. However, Zebron's account indicates that there is also little access to psychic privacy under these conditions. This is especially the case in the context of a mental institution when the mind is under constant scrutiny as a course of the treatment. The lack of privacy of one's thoughts, which always must be made public to one's doctor in individual sessions and to other patients during group sessions, creates the feeling of a loss of personhood and of being an object of manipulation. The suspicion that everyone knows your inner thoughts is an outcome of the process of rehabilitation as one is constantly asked to share one's feelings as a process of getting better.

Mental treatment exposes or opens up the mind, particularly, parts of the mind carrying paralyzing or destabilizing trauma, with the goal of healing. In addition to taking antipsychotic and antidepressive medications, discussed below, patients in Duiker's Valkenberg are regularly asked to talk through past experiences of violation. The lived experience of this treatment is the loss of psychic freedom and the chemically induced feelings of numbness and disconnection. Echoing Zebron's comments, Tshepo later asserts that he has been denied privacy the entire time he has been inside (54). Through Tshepo's experiences, Duiker presents the idea that rehabilitation is about the loss of privacy. Rehabilitation requires and demands this loss. The only way to get better is to give in *and* give up. We can recognize how institutions,

in general, are about surrender—surrender that is both for the good of the individual and for the public good in the context of mental institutions.

One might begin to wonder if there is agency possible in this space of surrender and erasure. Chapter 3 shows how writers imagine agency being claimed through desire and intimacy within the institutional space of the prison. The inmates, especially Reginald Hall's persona Reg, effect privacy through circuits of desire. In Duiker's text, there is ostensibly no getting outside the loss of privacy, no forging of privacy through intimacy within the state-supported institution of a mental facility. In fact, Tshepo's friendship with Zebron, which Tshepo believed to be a transgressive space of intimacy and solidarity, unveils further trauma and loss of privacy as Tshepo learns that Zebron has been spying on him for Tshepo's father and that this spy killed Tshepo's mother (under the protagonist's father's direction).²¹ This realization reignites trauma and destabilizes the protagonist. He thought that Zebron was his friend, but he finds out that this friend is simply another instrument of observation and documentation, making his private thoughts public to a third party (here, his father instead of the doctors).

Even though the friendship with Zebron is ultimately a betrayal and a means to further trauma, another friendship, with Matthew, offers Tshepo a strategy for dealing with the invasive and exposing nature of the hospital. Matthew has the same diagnosis as Tshepo: cannabis-induced psychosis. They are institutionalized and being treated for mental instability that allegedly results from the use of (illegal) cannabis. What lies behind the diagnosis of cannabis-induced psychosis is the South African federal criminalization of cannabis.²² In 1971 the state passed the Abuse of Dependence-Producing Substance and Rehabilitation Centres Act, which outlawed the use of certain "undesirable" and "dangerous" drugs and created a new legal framework for dealing with the sale or use of drugs deemed to be "dependence-producing" for the social welfare of the state.²³ The language used in the act reflects how legislators pointed explicitly to specific groups and cultural practices—such as Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape provinces, who have a tradition of growing cannabis.²⁴ The medical diagnosis in the novel reflects the state's desire to police certain populations and to fight political battles. Both Tshepo and Matthew become prisoners of this policy.

A significant part of Tshepo's healing process while at Valkenberg is taking a regiment of neuroleptics, mood stabilizers, and muscle relaxers, specifically, haloperidol and orphenadrine (146). Medical journalist Robert Whitaker explains how the use of antipsychotics, such as haloperidol, became a significant part of psychiatric treatment beginning in the mid-twentieth century; he tracks a shift from electric-shock treatments to medication to

handle diagnosed mental illness.²⁵ The medicine haloperidol is a common treatment for schizophrenia, specifically, and patients deemed to be “insane,” generally. Tshepo and Matthew are both officially diagnosed with cannabis-induced psychosis, but they are effectively treated for schizophrenia. The explicit reference to haloperidol summons the racialized history of diagnoses of psychosis and schizophrenia. The same historical moment that witnesses the embrace of neuroleptics within the psychiatric community also witnesses the transformation of insanity and schizophrenia from a means for evaluating White (female) neurosis and docility to an assessment of Black (male) hostility and social nonconformity, as medical historian Jonathan Metzl explains:

American assumptions about race, gender, and temperament of schizophrenia changed beginning in the 1960s. Many leading medical and popular sources suddenly described schizophrenia as an illness manifested not by docility, but by rage. Growing numbers of research articles from leading psychiatric journals asserted that schizophrenia was a condition that also afflicted “Negro men,” and that black forms of the illness were marked by volatility and aggression. In the worst cases, psychiatric authors conflated the schizophrenic symptoms of African American patients with the perceived schizophrenia of Black Power, Black Panthers, Nation of Islam, or other activist groups.²⁶

Metzl points out how the psychiatric community began to read the individual Black body as suffering psychoses because of the social activities of Black organizations concerned with liberation, political critique, and the undermining of racial ideologies as well as the popular discourse around them. The diagnoses had everything to do with racial ideologies and the public perceptions of Blackness during the time period as much as they had to do with an individual’s medical history. Metzl documents the racialization of a particular illness, and Duiker’s narrative ruminates on the ongoing legacies of that racialization not just in the United States but in the global medical community. Duiker asks that we think about Tshepo’s breakdown as not only about his own emotional issues but also in the context of South African society and how Black male identity gets read and evaluated. Through his diagnosis and the treatment for it, Tshepo’s identity gets overwritten by the assessment of his body and actions. Tshepo insists that when his doctors look at him, “They don’t see a person. They see a case, something that they must work out, decode, diagnose. [. . .] Our pain has become a tattoo. No one can erase it” (141). He presents as a (social) problem and not a person. Moreover, he compares being in the hospital to being on a slave ship right before he acknowledges the doctors’ treatment of him (140). He reaches this conclusion

because of the cramped living arrangements and arguably because of the way the individuals in Valkenberg are seen as being interchangeable, nonpersons who serve a purpose. They are objectified persons who are used to produce social knowledge rather than valuable crops, reinforcing the metaphorical connection to enslavement. The assertion that their pain has become a tattoo connects to notions of stigma and implies ideas about social marginalization. The protagonist turns to racialized histories of oppression to make sense of what he describes as the effacement of his personhood that is occasioned by his treatment for schizophrenia.²⁷

Although they feel trapped by their shared diagnosis and stigmatized by the treatment, Tshepo and Matthew find a private way through acts of naming to push against this public scripting of their identities. In thinking about their legally required stay at Valkenberg and their neuroleptic regiment, Tshepo asserts, “Mental patients with cannabis-induced psychosis that’s how they refer to us here. Not Tshepo or Matthew just mental patients. So we call each other Maestro to cheat them, to beat them at their own game and talk about our beloved Cesaria and Sao Tomé” (54). Both men like the songs of Cesária Évora, a celebrated Cape Verdean performer. Évora is famous for bringing attention to *morna*, which is a type of blues music that originated in Cape Verde, an archipelagic nation off the coast of western Africa near Senegal, Mauritania, the Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. “São Tomé Na Equador” is one of her recordings. Évora’s songs and *morna*, in general, are often about love and longing, and the music becomes a shared language for Tshepo and Matthew—a way of talking to each other that was unlike the therapy sessions. Tshepo insists that Évora “sings about lost love with such beauty and clarity of spirit you almost think her sadness is sweet” (54). His appreciation for the music is indicative of his own desire to transform sadness to something more pleasurable. The valuing of the song reflects the men’s dissatisfaction with their institutionalization and their desire to make something “sweet” of it. The shared love of Évora’s sweet sadness leads to the characters’ calling each other “maestro,” an honorific title given to a music conductor. This nickname signals their interest in having agency over their situations. A conductor is in charge of musicians and singers and sets the pace and intensity of the performance, ensuring order in what could be chaos. In calling themselves “maestro,” they express a desire for control over their lives through metaphor. Symbolically, the mutual act of naming represents the creation of a new narrative for their institutionalization. This nickname shared between them is a response to how their diagnosis evacuates them of any individuality or personhood. They seek to bring order to their lives and assume agency. Turning to artistic culture, they rename each other based on

their mutual interests and desires instead of outside assessment. This private act of naming does not preempt more trauma, but the playful gesture offers them both a brief respite from the felt trauma of rehabilitation as well as a modicum of privacy because it is a secret practice; it is a symbolic space of freedom. This small act of renaming prefigures a more defining one that Tshepo will take up after he leaves the hospital. Intimacy with another man grants Tshepo some imagined freedom and personal power. In thinking about Matthew, he insists that best friends “give the best love.” This renaming, with its whispers, secret sharing, and physical closeness in the dark, is an act of defiant lovegiving—and, perhaps, even symbolic lovemaking—within the institution. They turn to art—specifically, music—to create a shared interior space that evades institutional control.

The experience of being in a mental hospital becomes the defining feature of the protagonist’s experience and identity. For most of the narrative, Tshepo is never able to leave the symbolic space of the institution, even after he has been discharged. His diagnosis follows him and informs the rest of his social experiences. He gets fired from his job at a restaurant after his employer finds out that Tshepo had been in a mental institution for drug-induced psychosis. His roommate and co-employee Chris informs on him in hopes of getting his job, and it works. Tshepo’s medical history makes him suspicious and incapable of being employed. As a former mental patient, he is perceived as being a threat to the other employees and the culture of the workplace, so he is terminated. Because he is seen as a threat, he faces humiliation, economic precarity, and social injury. The firing signals the social stigma of mental-health treatment and drug use of any kind, but it also registers the idea that a (former) mental-hospital patient is deemed a potential menace to society.

Sociologist Arthur Frank explains how stigma is distressing for the individual who has been stigmatized as well as for those who are forced to confront the stigma and their own anxieties around it.²⁸ He continues, “The work of the stigmatized person is not only to avoid embarrassing himself by being out of control in situations where control is expected. The person must also avoid embarrassing others, who should be protected from the spectre of the lost body control [associated with the stigma-carrying person]” (31). Frank describes a double burden to stigma: one’s consciousness of stigma (especially as relates to illness) means being hyperaware of one’s body and the realities that create the sense of social shame, but one must also be hyperaware of other people’s feelings and reactions so that others are not “imposed upon” by one’s condition. Implicit here is the idea that stigma is thought of in terms of social contagion and is spatialized, as one’s stigma might move to others because of physical proximity; one’s stigmatized body

might infect or invade others. The stigmatized body is a porous body. It is for this reason that Frank references the fear of “lost body control” when explaining the public’s reaction to stigma. He refers to this dual concern (for the self and the anxieties of others) as “work” because it is emotional labor. Tshepo might be slightly embarrassed by his medical history, but he also has to deal with other people’s prejudices. His past makes him untrustworthy, but the firing also reflects a desire to remove the specter of mental illness, instability, and disorder from the space of the restaurant, a site of commerce that is a metonym for the larger social world. He is a threat to the social order of life outside of institutional space because the spatial logic of stigma shapes the sense of community and relation.

Tshepo’s relationship with his roommate, Chris, replicates his feeling of being under observation in the hospital. At home and at work he feels constrained by observation and his diagnosis. Tshepo, after being discharged from the hospital, moves in with Chris, a Coloured man in his mid-twenties, who had spent nine years in prison for stabbing someone and who was deeply impacted by the regiment of prison protocol. As they are getting to know each other, Tshepo admits that he had been at Valkenberg, and Chris responds, “Valkenberg is vir mal mense,” which means in Afrikaans that it is for crazy people (152). This admission does not keep Chris from living with Tshepo, but Chris does believe that his new roommate is a threat because he had been in Valkenberg, and he later uses this information against Tshepo. Throughout their time living together, Chris always monitors Tshepo’s movements. At one point, Chris admits, “I watched him closely,” going so far as to peep through his key hole to spy on him.²⁹ The only bathroom in the shared apartment is in Tshepo’s en suite room, so it became typical for Chris to move in and out of Tshepo’s separate space. Tshepo’s activities in his bedroom and the bathroom were always under scrutiny. Chris watches him constantly and severely criticizes him if the bathroom is not cleaned to Chris’s specifications. Just as the treatment in Valkenberg consisted of the surrendering of privacy, Tshepo is forcibly made to cede his privacy repeatedly while living with Chris. Because of Chris’s knowledge of Tshepo’s diagnosis, the apartment becomes a space of observation, replicating the dynamics of Valkenberg.

The forceful surrendering of his private space transforms into a forceful surrendering of his body. Later in the narrative, Chris rapes Tshepo with the help of two friends. Chris narrates, “Virgil stands back and gives me the signal. I take off my pants. Virgil and Brendan pin him down and spread his legs. They bring his chops toward me. I get an erection and put loads of Vaseline on my piel [penis]. I try to force my way in but he is too tense” (212). The sexual violation is a forceful assertion of power over Tshepo. When the narrative

shifts perspectives during this scene, Tshepo painfully recounts, “The one took me from behind while the other almost choked me with his dick” (77). Chris had felt intimidated by his roommate and jealous of his success. He also harbored a latent desire for him—when he got drunk, he would stand naked in front of Tshepo and intimate seduction by grabbing his penis. Chris is attracted to Tshepo and a bit repulsed by his own feelings so that his sublimated desire gets expressed through this group brutality. Just as Tshepo’s medical diagnosis becomes Chris’s means for advancing professionally, Tshepo’s reluctant body becomes Chris’s means of publicly asserting masculine dominance and shielding his queer desire as a power play. One might think of Chris’s actions as replicating prison dynamics in terms of intrusiveness and physical violation—as the rectal searches Robinson mentions in the previous chapter illustrate. The three men watching and violating Tshepo’s body make his room absolutely public. Curiously, Chris creates privacy through the actions in that he gets to obscure his actual sexual desire as punishment for Tshepo’s weakness. He masks his queer sexual attraction as hypermasculine (hetero)sexual aggression, denying the former mental patient privacy or bodily autonomy. Chris gains privacy as Tshepo’s is taken away just as it had been in the hospital. The space of the bedroom becomes a confusion of private and public, hiding and showing; injurious actions cause spatial confusion.

This physical violence and fracturing of privacy create a negative spatial sensibility for Tshepo. He says that he feels as if he is “between things, neither here or there” (225). The liminality he describes is actually a description of his sense of a “no-placedness,” or having no place in the social world where he can feel supported and connected to others.³⁰ Institutional policies, social interactions, and intrusions into private spaces yield a fractured sense of place. Tshepo goes on to say that “being outside Valkenberg” makes him sad. This sentiment might seem surprising, but the reason that the world outside of the hospital creates feelings of dejection is that he expected it to be different from his experience inside. Unfortunately, he finds the outside world to be eerily similar as the invasive sexual violence shows. Valkenberg’s presence is felt outside of its physical walls; escape from the invasive influence of institutions feels unlikely. His privacy is still taken away, but the hospital’s mental invasion and psychological manipulation are replaced by Chris’s physical violation and psychological terrorism. Tshepo needs some sense of order and a way to support himself, and this traumatic encounter within the built environment of his bedroom sends him on a search to find physical and emotional connections that are nonthreatening.

Duiker has his protagonist turn to a different kind of institution to undo the violence begun at Valkenberg and extended into the space of his bedroom. In

desperate need of employment, Tshepo answers an advertisement that claims “instant money and flexible hours” at Steamy Windows, a massage parlor for men (204). He is hired and finds that what is being sold is more than mere therapeutic massage. Accepting the job, Tshepo becomes a sex worker to support himself. However, the parlor is not a random assortment of men working for a pimp just to make money. They see themselves as a fraternal order and refer to the group as a “brotherhood.” Specifically, the Steamy Windows therapists take inspiration from the members of the nineteenth-century Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais. One of the men, West, insists that the Pre-Raphaelites were “artistic revolutionaries [who] attacked social injustices and celebrated the values and qualities of life in the past” (257). He suggests that through their intimacy and collaboration, these artists reclaimed a lost ethic of living and asserted a subversive social identity. The Steamy Windows men are invested in undermining dominant ideologies that limit possibilities in the construction of gender, sexuality, and sociality, in general. They see the Pre-Raphaelites as their progenitors, but the modern men’s *métier* is sexual intimacy rather than painting.

Duiker’s narrative presentation of this brotherhood is a conscious construction of an institution rather than the simple representation of a mere collective. The Steamy Windows brotherhood is a space designed specifically for cultural citizenship and male belonging. The men have a collective sense that the social world has failed them but that together they can create a space of intimacy that will allow them to support each other in a way that society with its customary ideas around gender and sexual desire will not. Even though the 1994 constitution outlawed sexual discrimination, male same-sex acts (sodomy, specifically) remained criminal until 1998.³¹ In embracing male-male sexual intimacy and holding it up as a central component of their ideology and praxis, the men of Steamy Windows actively institutionalize values and social practices around male intimacy in contradiction to state policy. Because it dominates the latter half of the narrative and because it becomes a stepping-stone to Tshepo’s mental and physical stability, it functions as a systematic challenge to his experience in Valkenberg. I read the brotherhood as an attempt at a *counterinstitution* and develop this idea in response to the work of scholars who have theorized “counterpublics.”³² I think of a counterinstitution as an organization that sets itself up in contrast to dominant social norms and cultural expectations. The brotherhood is never just a fraternal society; it is a business with structure, regulations, and values created with a purpose of spiritual and emotional edification that its participants feel is absent from society. The trauma and disappointment

Tshepo experiences through the mental hospital and the shadow of his diagnosis lead him to seek an institution that appears to challenge the hospital and the society that supports it and to offer the possibility of a different kind of healing. A counterinstitution focused on healing, Steamy Windows becomes a foil to the mental hospital.

Situating Steamy Windows as both a site of sex work and healing allows us to contextualize Duiker's representation within historic spatializations of labor and same-sex desire in South Africa. One might consider South African migrant-worker hostels, which were marginal spaces in which "deviant heterosexual and nonheterosexual took place."³³ Although the connection to migrant hostels may help to frame the sex work happening at the massage parlor in terms of labor and spatial marginalization in South Africa, gay "health clubs" (massage houses and saunas) are a much more obvious analogue to Duiker's massage parlor. Historical researchers Peter Galli and Luis Rafael discuss "health clubs" in Johannesburg, the nation's capital, in the 1950s and 1960s that served as sites for socializing and erotic play for White gay men: "The health clubs remained a popular alternative to the other facilities then available to gay men, and were one of the few outlets for the relatively safe expression of gay sexuality. [. . .] The heyday period of the 'health clubs' was also the height of the apartheid era, the time of Strijdom and Verwoerd, when the visible gay scene was one occupied by white men only."³⁴ The clubs condoned male-male sex acts even though the apartheid government had criminalized homosexuality under sodomy laws inherited from British colonization and later with the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 sought to limit sex at social gatherings. Galli and Rafael go on to say that the clubs were contradictory because they represented both liberation in terms of sexual expression and repression because they were still illegal (139). Duiker's novel reformulates the mid-century health clubs into his early twenty-first-century massage parlor and actively takes up both the possibilities of liberation and the realities of oppression within this space of labor and pleasure. By having the Black queer protagonist work and find pleasure there, Duiker allow us to think about how racial difference might reveal further tensions between liberation and repression.

Through working at the counterinstitution of Steamy Windows, Tshepo develops a new relationship to his body and a different understanding of his desires. His embrace of the brotherhood means moving through an illicit space, but it also means removing himself from the constant social observation that had defined his life since being admitted to the hospital. A place like Steamy Windows is supposed to be "under the radar," meaning away from public attention and regulation as a part of an underground economy

and because of the criminalization of sex work. Such shielding from public scrutiny is exactly what the protagonist desires. Being under the radar is a way of getting away from the pressure of his diagnosis and away from social regulation. In the context of working at the parlor and having long conversations with the other men, he asserts, "It is stupid to suggest that homosexuality and lesbianism are foreign to black culture. Long ago, long before whites, people were aware of the blurs" (250). The reference to the "blur" summarizes a sexual ambiguity that defies strict societal boundaries around desire, and it emerges in the narrative in the space of the brotherhood. Tshepo's idea of the blur connects to twenty-first-century critical race theory, specifically, Fred Moten's work. In his contemplation of how Blackness unsettles social meaning, Moten uses his astigmatism, which creates a blur in his vision, as the basis for a metaphor. He transforms his inability to see the world effectively into an evaluative lens that allows for a different way of interpreting social dynamics. Moten explains this concept as "a kind of partition in refusal of partition; a general assertion of inseparability, which nevertheless still moves in and as a ubiquitous and continual differentiation; a breaking or cutting or scoring."³⁵ Through this seeming contradiction, he describes a definitive way of being that constitutes itself through the refusal of boundaries and the parameters that help to generate an individual body. He continues, "Perhaps what it is to refuse the limits of the body is to refuse the limit of regulation in and for possessive individuation and to embrace the proliferation of limits' irregular devotion to difference and blur" (259). Here he gets to the point of the blur: the repudiation of regulation. It is about movement in defiance of social control. The blur is both a visual and spatial metaphor. It images the kind of spatial disruption discussed in the previous chapter by disordering how we see the world and how we think about it. The insistence on inseparability is not a denial of integrity of individual personhood; it represents a reluctance to allow personhood to be defined by the outside world. One is a blur in that one is illegible under the framework of social convention. This complex idea is what Tshepo is talking about and how he comes to see himself as he is working as a sexual laborer. The precise image of a steamy window suggests illegibility; we cannot quite discern what occurs behind vapor-laden glass. Duiker's image of a steamy window registers a desire to evade a public gaze. The recognition of the blur is about accepting his sexual orientation, but it is also a refusal of the boundaries on his identity created by his medical diagnosis.

The brotherhood also becomes a site of redefinition for the protagonist because he renames himself. As a part of the job, he takes on a pseudonym. He chooses the name Angelo in honor of the artist Michelangelo. Naming

himself after an artist is important because Tshepo studied painting while at a university (278). Taking on the name connects him to creativity and to his preinstitutionalized self. This renaming represents a symbolic autopoietic self-narrating that is an extension of the transgressive nicknaming he and Matthew did. At Steamy Windows, Tshepo gets to be Angelo and leave behind trauma. This redefinition and movement past trauma entail Tshepo becoming more comfortable with his body and expanding his sexual horizons. Because of cultural mores against homosexuality and his sexual violation, he had refused to be penetrated by another man while working at Steamy Windows. He felt uncomfortable receiving during anal sex, so initially he denies any client's request to penetrate him. He explains that he had held his body "prisoner": "I put limits on my body, cordoned off a certain part of me. I starved myself of the curiosity of discovery" (333). The refusal to be penetrated is an embodied blocking of the invasive tactics used, in different circumstances, by hospital staff and by his roommate. Tshepo seals himself off sexually to prevent further encroachments on his person. Being a part of the brotherhood gives him a new perspective and encourages him to think differently about paths of desire. When he does finally experience sex as the receptive partner, he liberates his body from self-imposed imprisonment. He embraces his full self. This sexual experimentation becomes emblematic of a new identity. This shift in behavior and opening of the self occurs in the chapter "Angelo." It is the first time that Tshepo's first-person narrative appears with this title. Every chapter up to this point featuring Tshepo carries his real name. Duiker registers the character's shift in viewpoint and feeling about his body by offering a new chapter heading. Steamy Windows has altered the presentation of the narrative.

The idea that the Steamy Windows brotherhood functions as a site of transformation and healing does not mean that Duiker presents it as a utopian space or one free from bias. The ostensible counterinstitution replicates social dynamics in other institutions. Returning to my previous assertion, Duiker weaves in ideas about liberation and repression as he recasts the idea of the gay health club. Duiker sets up the brotherhood as a paradigmatic counterinstitution, but, ultimately, his representation of it reflects the elements of the society that it sets out to critique. The reader finds that racism emerges in the context of the interracial brotherhood devoted to sexual intimacy and liberation. Just as his treatment at Valkenberg invoked racial histories, his interactions at Steamy Windows ultimately calls up racial inequality even as the men make claims for liberation. After an overnight appointment, Tshepo goes to talk to Shaun, the parlor manager, to settle his account and catch up about the visit:

"So how was that guy? He seemed like an arsehole," [Shaun] says, writing down the details.

"Actually, he was alright. His boyfriend broke up with him last night," I explain.

"So that's why he was like that. For a minute I thought he was going to go kaffir on us last night," he says and looks up suddenly. "Sorry I didn't mean it like that."

I'm shocked, offended. That word has always stung, but I smile to dismiss the comment. The bubble had to burst sometime I say to myself, my mind still reeling from that word. (284–85)

Kaffir is a racial slur used by White South Africans to refer to Black South Africans. The term recalls a specific racial history and summons the ideologies of social inequality that laid the groundwork for apartheid-era South Africa. West had said that the brotherhood celebrates the past. Tshepo finds that the past that is being celebrated is one that contains racial inequality. Shaun's lighthearted use of the offensive term indicates how comfortable he is with it and how it is a part of his regular vocabulary. The "bubble" that gets burst at this moment is Tshepo's sense that Steamy Windows is a safe space of equality and intimacy. He had found healing through the open embrace of queer desire, but he experiences racial injury within this space of sexual healing. The freedom he imagines is not without constraint.

Wendy Brown's work on the institutionalization of freedom and the failings of liberating projects helps to illuminate Tshepo's bubble-bursting moment. Brown explains, "The first imaginings of freedom are always constrained by and potentially even require the very structure of oppression that freedom emerges to oppose. [. . .] When institutionalized, freedom premised upon an already vanquished enemy keeps alive, in the manner of a melancholy logic, a threat that works as domination in the form of an absorbing ghostly battle with the past" (7–8). New articulations of freedom may replicate the frameworks of oppressive systems they seek to disrupt. Steamy Windows is described as a fraternal order dedicated to forging social and political freedom through intimacy. The occupants might imagine it to be antithetical to the rest of society, but it reflects some of the systems of oppression that compromise the possibility of freedom outside the brotherhood. Shaun's reliance upon a racial epithet epitomizes the idea of a "melancholy logic" in that he seems unable to move past, in a psychoanalytic sense, an investment in racial thinking. Racism lingers in this space of alleged radical freedom. The ease with which he turns to the racist term suggests that he longs for traditional ways of making sense of people and their actions. What is more, Shaun tries to tell Tshepo that he should not be offended because the word

does not mean what the protagonist thinks it means, and his intentions were not to offend. He denies any racialized history to the word and essentially tells Tshepo that any bad feeling he has is based in *Tshepo's* misunderstanding of the word and the situation. From this perspective, Tshepo's sense of being wounded is self-inflicted. Shaun adds the proverbial insult to injury by effectively blaming Tshepo for the feeling of being offended. Through a twisted logic, the moment of offense becomes Tshepo's fault through his (allegedly willful) misunderstanding of Shaun's meaning. The moment reveals how Whiteness and colonialist logics function: declaring innocence of any wrongdoing or intent, insisting that racial hierarchies are relics of the past, and asserting that minority subjects create the problem of racism by thinking in terms of race. What Tshepo thought was a refuge becomes an embattled site, and in that moment, he retreats from a battle he feels he cannot win.

Shaun's racist comments divulge the prominence of racial tensions that quietly subtend the brotherhood. Eventually, Tshepo becomes curious about why almost all of his customers are White men. The suggestion is that many have come to engage in sexual fantasies about Black "stallions"—the over-sexed Black man. Shaun even refers to Tshepo and the other Black masseurs in these terms to possible clients.³⁶ Tshepo also begins to wonder why the men working at Steamy Windows are all either White or Black; there are no Coloured or Asian employees (343). These absences poorly reflect the actual racial and ethnic composition of the nation. Steamy Windows suffers from its own unspoken racial hierarchies, although Shaun's comments indicate that sometimes these hierarchies are spoken with alarming clarity. Literary critic Shaun Viljoen insists that racism is not an "overarching construct" in the lives of the characters, "yet it is ever present having been banished from policy to take refuge inside the heads and in the very walls of institutions like the madhouse, the restaurant, and the brothel."³⁷ Even if the South Africa created with the deconstruction of apartheid tried to rid the nation-state of its troubling history and reconcile antagonisms, these structural dynamics manifest in interpersonal relationships and within different institutions like the brotherhood. Unsurprising, the postapartheid South Africa is still battling with the presence of the recent past. In her insightful reading of the novel, literary historian Brenna Munro argues that Duiker's concerns with a "panoply of fragile interracial relationships reflects the national project of reconciliation" (208). It is the fragility of such relationships that become the focus here. The brotherhood is a microcosm of the ongoing project of South African democracy and a case study for how citizens reckon with racial histories. However, if the brotherhood is part of a larger metaphor for the nation-state, Duiker show us the limits of a desired reconciliation

that would resolve social strife. The counterinstitution of the brotherhood fails to resolve or fully do away with racism even as it touts itself as a site of equality, freedom, and unrestrained possibility. In the novel, queer desire and intimacy are powerful and have the ability to redefine one's sense of self. Nevertheless, in Duiker's imagining, intimate encounters are never free from the ideological trap of anti-Black racial thinking and colonialist logic. The counterinstitution fails to counter; it reproduces the dynamics (hierarchy and invasive control) present in its foil, the mental hospital. The protagonist is made socially vulnerable in both spaces.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams illustrates how there can be severe checks to the power attributed to queer desire. Same-sex intimacy frees Tshepo from some constraining ways of thinking, helps him to heal from physical trauma, and allows him to revel in physical pleasure. However, racial injury emerges within that space of healing. The protagonist might find a freedom and bodily satisfaction as Angelo, but racist logics remain and threaten him in a place where he felt safe and at peace with his body. There are limits to the potential of queer desire to effect change and undermine existing ideologies.³⁸ My reading of Duiker's novel puts pressure on the arguments I advance in the preceding chapter. In the discussion of *Memoir: Delaware County Prison* in chapter 3, I insist that the author's persona Reg uses desire to navigate racially inflected institutional space of prison, a site where desire is forbidden. Within the brotherhood, an institutional site dedicated to celebratory eroticism, Tshepo finds himself imprisoned by racist ideologies. Together these two chapters chart out how social ideologies around race and gender overlay circuits of desire. The power of desire to define who we are must always be measured against and put in the context of social dynamics. Desire, like Steamy Windows, should not be thought of as utopic or always satisfactory. Desire can be thwarted or undermined, especially for Black queer bodies. What is empowering for some might be endangering for others as the references to Reg's friend Lamont indicate in *Memoir*. Focusing on institutional settings helps to make clear how desire gets controlled and manipulated. My emphasis on desire's potential is not meant to lessen the vulnerability it can introduce or ignore the possibility of further injury. Instead, I think of desire as providing a way through such injury, a way to deal with it and at times shield the body from injury. Tshepo turns to a different kind of institution when the hospital fails to be a site of healing. Showing the limits of the brotherhood, Duiker suggests that institutions may fail to offer to the Black queer subject the kinds of spaces of healing and civic security that they may seek.

Tshepo's diagnosis followed him outside the space of treatment and shaped many of his experiences. Part of his motivation throughout the novel is to deal with and move past the physical and mental injuries that knowledge about his medical record creates for his life. Although Tshepo is able to elude the social implications of his diagnosis and redefine his life by leaving Cape Town at the end of the novel, one should not think that it is always possible to free oneself from the lurking shadow of one's medical history. To enrich this discussion, I explore how even in death, the medical gaze attempts to mark and define us. Health care is not just for the living; it extends to the (recently) deceased. Even in the act of dying, we are put on the institutional record and defined—sometimes against our wishes. Being pronounced dead is the final diagnosis.

The work of Scottish writer Jackie Kay demonstrates this idea of diagnosis and medical attention extending to the deceased and broadens the consideration of the vulnerability of the Black queer subject. This examination of (medical) injury and queer desire in the diaspora moves from South Africa to the United Kingdom. I use Kay's work, in the context of writings about transgender life and history, to illustrate the invasive medical attention given to the dead and how artists attempt to undermine efforts to control the bodies and public knowledge about the deceased, by using narrative strategies to shield nonnormative subjects even when their bodies are exposed. Attention is given to how artists respond to and question the opening of the body that is part and parcel to interacting with and receiving attention from the medical community. The goal here is to illuminate further the historical tensions that have existed and continue to exist between the medical establishment and minority bodies and show how concerns about these tensions prevail for Black subjects in different countries.

In his influential work on narrative and illness, Frank explains how the “losses brought on by the disease open up fears that one's intactness has always been more imaginary than the self has wanted to believe. Selves are truly unmade in these complex fears” (176). Frank describes how the experience of illness and treatment can make one question the integrity of the body and suggest that the body itself is always permeable. In this way, sickness and medical treatment may shed light on the *openness* of the body. One of the elements that encourages this recognition of the body as open is the medical record itself. Getting treatment means having to interact with health professionals, and this interaction often includes the creation of or addition to a medical record or history. Documentation of illness or treatment necessarily means giving up one's privacy and details about one's personal

life for the greater good of one's health. It is not possible to shield oneself if one wants treatment. Of course, it makes sense to be upfront with a medical professional to obtain the best possible treatment. However, medical records act as an invasion of privacy, illustrating Frank's point about the opening of the body. Health-care facilities are often imagined as spaces of treatment and support, but they often replicate the social dynamics of the outside world as Lorde's encounter with the nursing staff suggests. Medical records can undermine the privacy we try to create for ourselves and enact discursive violence. Tshepo feels as if he must leave Cape Town to escape fully the pressure of his diagnosis—of course, there is no guarantee that he will be able to do so. That being said, his decision to leave is an attempt to escape or elude the social pressure of the diagnosis.

These ideas about a medical record, death, and the attempt to shield identity form the foundation for Kay's 1998 debut novel, *Trumpet*. Kay, the daughter of a Nigerian father and a (White) Scottish mother, who is adopted by a (White) Scottish couple, is the *makar*, or national Scottish poet. In her first poetry collection, *The Adoption Papers* (1992), she explores elements of her own life story by thinking through the complex familial dynamics involved in adoption, the challenges to the lives of women and girls, and the expressions of anti-Black racism in Scotland in light of its geographic location and immigration history.³⁹ Her novel *Trumpet* can be read as an outgrowth of the work begun in the poetry collection as issues around interracial adoption, women's lives, immigration, and racism undergird the narrative exploration of the life of jazz musician Joss Moody. The novel is not only a clever movement of ideas across literary forms (from poem sequence to novelistic prose), but it is also an artistic reworking of the biography of jazz musician Billy Tipton (1914–89). Tipton was assigned female at birth, but he began to bind his breasts and dress as a man to pursue his dream of performing in the all-male world of jazz performance. By his mid-twenties he was living his life as a male in both his public and private life. Tipton would go on to adopt three children with one of his female partners. After he died, his assigned sex was revealed, and the details of his private life became a national news story.⁴⁰ The postdeath revelation of his assigned sex that led to a rescripting of Tipton's life becomes the jumping-off point for Kay's novel about queer identity and desire in Scotland. Kay makes the Tipton figure of African descent in her novel, creating the opportunity to explore racial formation in Scotland and the rest of United Kingdom, in general, and to interrogate how racial identity impacts one's understanding of sexual identity, and vice versa.

Trumpet is concerned with mourning, familial legacies, and intimacy in the context of death. This analysis of *Trumpet* concentrates on a specific

scene that reveals how the medical apparatus of a record opens the body, stymies agency, and extends institutional presence into space presumed to be private. The narrative development pivots around this moment, and it establishes the undermining of Joss's privacy and the literal and figurative opening of his body.

The novel begins with the death of the famous trumpet player Joss Moody. The narrative is made up of reactions to the death as well as flashbacks to Joss's past. Because he has died, Joss is a lost subject who is never completely accessible to the reader through the narrative.⁴¹ After his wife, Millie, realizes that he is dead in the middle of the night, the first person to see Joss's lifeless body is a doctor. The passage detailing the encounter is cited at length because it is elemental to the story and the depiction of Joss's posthumous character:

Doctor Krishnamurty got out her medical certificate and started filling in the obvious, prior to her own examination. Time of death: 1.12. Date: 21 July 1997. Sex: Male. She then felt the pulse which was quite empty and listened to the heart which was silent. She undid the pajamas to examine the body. There were many bandages wrapped around the chest of the deceased which she had to undo. The bandages were sticky and sweaty. They were very difficult to remove. Doctor Krishnamurty felt as if she was removing skin, each wrapping of bandage that she peeled off felt unmistakably like a layer of skin. So much so that the doctor became quite apprehensive about what kind of injury the bandages could be hiding. When she first saw the breasts [. . .] she thought that they weren't real breasts at all. At least not women's breasts. [. . .] She got her red pen out from her doctor's bag. What she thought of as her emergency red pen. She crossed "male" out and wrote "female" in her rather bad doctor's handwriting. She looked at the word "female" and thought it wasn't quite clear enough. She crossed that out, tutting to herself, and printed "female" in large childish letters. Then she put the medical certificate in the envelope, wondered what the registrar would make of it, sealed the envelop and closed the door on the dead woman. (43–44)

In this passage, the doctor discovers that Joss has bound his breasts. The bindings are not presented as cloth vestments; they are described as being a veritable part of Joss's body. The act of removing them is likened to removing a layer of skin. This removal is not just an act of exposure for the purposes of medical examination; it is a deconstruction of the integrity of Joss's body. This member of the medical community dismembers Joss. It is as if an autopsy is begun in Joss's bedroom. The room is made into a clinical space because of the investigation. Just as a space in which a crime has occurred becomes a

crime scene, a space under jurisdiction by the state and controlled by a unique set of rules and no longer accessible to even those that occupy that space normally, a space of medical investigation can take on new spatial meaning and be under the regulation of state-supported authorities and no longer private. Medical attention appears in terms of invasion, but here it is physical as opposed to the psychological invasion as in *Quiet Violence*.

This act of dismemberment becomes an act of misreading and misgendering as the narrative continues. In removing Joss's bindings and recording "female" on the medical certificate, the character of Krishnamurty enacts discursive violence on Joss. She changes the detail of Joss's sex from "male" to "female" and uses red ink to make the alteration stand out on the black-and-white document. The registrar who later receives the document describes the red-inked correction as "unnecessarily violent" (77). The purpose of Krishnamurty's "emergency" red pen is to correct mistakes, so the social reading of Joss's body as male gets registered as an error. The doctor goes one step further by crossing out her first writing of "female" and printing it again in bigger script to emphasize the amending of the record. Kay characterizes Krishnamurty's final writing of "female" as being in "childish letters," suggesting that the doctor has a simplistic or immature understanding of Joss's gender identity. Kay's diction finds fault with the ostensible power and knowledge of the medical professional. One might wonder why it would be necessary for a death certificate to mark sex. It ensures that the state's authorities have the right body and that that body can be connected to a record for verification. Additionally, in archiving as much as possible about the cadaver, the record attempts to replicate and then stand in for the dead body. Our inscription in the record is both a means for and a representation of our being enveloped in the folds of state power and control. Joss has not only died; he has been supplanted by an authoritative document. The first public viewing of Joss's body is presented as a scene of medical correction and the inscription of gender identity for the public record. The medical certificate represents a refusal to see Joss as a man, and this denial is so absolute that even the novelistic prose shifts from "man" to "woman" in the final moments of the passage. The doctor uses language and the record to define Joss in death. Kay's novel indicates that one does not have to be in a hospital or institution to be vulnerable to the interpellating gaze of the medical establishment. That space is potentially anywhere once medical agents are called. Institutions are not just physical places and built environments. Through their representatives, they extend outwards into space and make anywhere a potential institution, such as the Moodys' private bedroom. Institutional space and the power that accompa-

nies it are mobile. This idea supports my larger theory of the space of injury being potentially any space through which the Black queer body moves.

My reading of this scene in Joss and Millie's bedroom as one of medical discursive violence builds on Susan Stryker's discussion of transgender rage. In her oft-cited essay "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix," Stryker discusses the social construction of the transsexual body as a monstrous other, and she embraces that otherness as a defiant way to undermine patriarchy, sexism, and traditional ideas about corporeality while also recognizing the difficulty of occupying this positionality.⁴² The essay is made up of four sections, each of which relies upon a different method and critical voice: performance, literary criticism, journal entries, and theoretical analysis. In the final section, Stryker builds on the work of Judith Butler in discussing "the non-consensual gendering of another" (253). She insists that we all experience this gendering at birth with the declaration of our sex. Stryker describes this act as "gendering violence" primarily because the linguistic declaration occurs without our consent. Kay maps this idea of nonconsensual gendering onto the scene of the doctor's viewing and recording of Joss's body. Krishnamurty symbolically declares, "It's a man!"—at death instead of birth. I connect Kay's scene to Stryker's discussion to solidify the point that the medical gaze does not only fall on the living; it extends its reach to the (recently) deceased. The actual final rites of the body are medical rites (the coroner, autopsy, assessment).

More than offering an understanding of the kind of discursive violence the doctor performs in Kay's novel, Stryker's multimodal essay illuminates the visual crisis introduced by the gender nonconforming body and clarifies how narrative addresses this crisis. In the literary criticism section of the essay, Stryker engages Peter Brooks's reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*:

[Brooks] understands Frankenstein to unfold textually through a narrative strategy generated by tension between a visually oriented epistemology, on the one hand, and another approach to knowing the truth of bodies that privileges verbal linguisticity, on the other (199–200). Knowing by seeing and knowing by speaking/hearing are gendered, respectively, as masculine and feminine in the critical framework within which Brooks operates. [. . .] The monster problematizes gender partly through its failure as a viable subject in the visual field; though referred to as "he," it thus offers a feminine, and potentially feminist, resistance to definition by a phallicized scopophilia. The monster accomplishes this resistance by mastering language in order to claim a position as a speaking subject and enact verbally the very subjectivity denied it in the specular realm. (247)

The tension between what is seen and what is spoken gets to the heart of the ethical dilemma in the scene with the doctor. Krishnamurty believes that she can look at Joss's naked body and know his gender identity regardless of what she has been told by Joss's wife or how Joss may have described himself in life. Joss and Frankenstein's monster occupy a similar location rhetorically. I am not calling Joss a monster. Instead, following Stryker, I am saying that Joss pushes against or disorders our common path to knowing, and Kay's narrative questions how we know what we know and questions the claims to legitimacy the medical establishment professes to have. Joss's Black queer body's resistance to interpretation forces the doctor into a state of emergency, and she turns to her red pen to inscribe a kind of legibility upon that body through the record of medical history. The doctor uses writing to resolve for herself what she experiences as the visual crisis of Joss's body.

Joss had avoided medical attention all of his life. His adopted son Colman says that Joss had "a lifelong terror, phobia whatever, about hospitals" (68). Much like Tipton, Joss suffered from untreated illnesses as an outcome of protecting himself from medical definition of his body that might redefine his public gender identity or even endanger his life. Joss's concerted effort to stay away from doctors reflects an attempt to exist apart from nonconsensual gendering. Unfortunately, in death, he is no longer able to elude this gaze of institutional authority. His body is forced to confront "the terrible finality of the death certificate" (73). The registrar, whose job it is to file Joss's paperwork in the archive, insists that death certificates "were not simply pieces of paper with names and number on them. There were people in there" (73). Through this character, Kay presents the image of the death certificate as containing the person whose life it details. The death certificate, in publicly documenting a person's most intimate physical details, also imprisons them within the logic of the medical establishment and ideologies around legible identity. One only has to consider the uproar about Kenneth Goldsmith's interpretation and reading of the autopsy of Michael Brown (the Black eighteen-year-old shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri) as a poetic work in 2015 to realize how often these documents are connected to the physical being of the body because of the intimate details they relay.⁴³ Although Joss had sought to avoid the imprisoning logic of gendering that would have accompanied a trip to a hospital or medical clinic, in death he is confined in ink on paper. He is written into a particular kind of existence without his consent. Kay offers us injury through discursive (literally written) violence.

This symbolic injury that exceeds the boundaries of life and death makes clear why the focus throughout this book has been on different kinds of acts of injury rather than death itself. The larger argument is that the Black queer

subject is an injury-bound subject, and here we find that it is the Black queer *body*, specifically, that cannot escape from injury. In Kay's novel, death is not necessarily the result of injury; genuine injury follows the death. A focus primarily on the threat of death does not effectively enough elucidate the kinds of hurt and degradation that the doctor's "terrible" red pen enacts.

Kay stresses the vulnerability of Joss in death, but the narrative does not only showcase this discursive violence. The novel ends with Joss's voice through a letter—a piece of writing—and through this document, Kay interrupts narratively the violence begun by the death certificate. When Colman is going through his father's things after he has died, he finds a letter marked, "To be opened after my death" (65). Colman refuses to open it because he is angry at Joss for never having told him about Joss's assigned sex at birth. The son is so embarrassed that he has agreed to help a reporter to write a "tell-all" biography of Joss. This biography is an extension of the "tell-all" death certificate in offering up Joss's secrets to strangers. Joss's secrecy, his ostensible denial of intimacy, makes Colman feel estranged from his father. Much of *Trumpet* is about the experience of mourning, and Colman's acts of mourning surface as anger. Seemingly, he is angry for having been lied to, but he is really angry about the loss of his father and about being left feeling vulnerable. The sections of the novel that focus on Colman highlight that he is on a journey to establish a connection to his departed father—he goes so far as to locate Joss's estranged mother. The two men, Colman and Joss, become closer in death than they had been in life, and the letter is the final key to this familial intimacy.

The penultimate chapter "Last Word" offers the content of the letter that Joss writes to his son. Through this epistolary chapter, Kay presents Joss as defiantly refusing the scripting of identity and violence that is enacted through the death certificate and elaborated in the work-in-progress biography. The novel is full of documents (death certificates, book manuscripts, letters)—all of which are narratives about Joss. The letter is a symbolic counterpoint to the death certificate. The reader's expectation is likely that this letter holds the "truth" behind Joss's secret and that Joss will share intimate details about his decision to live as a man and marry a woman. The content of the letter might expose to the reader and the world in the novel the private knowledge about Joss, the secrets that he has kept even from his son. However, there is no reference to Joss's assigned sex and only oblique allusions to his gender identity. Joss does not discuss those matters. Instead, the letter mostly talks about the life of Joss's father, John Moore, a man from an unidentified African country, who comes to Scotland as a child and works as a servant in the home of a rich family. He says about his father, "His story could be the story of any

black man who came from Africa to Scotland. His story, I told you, was the diaspora. Every story runs into the same river and the same river runs into the sea" (271). This passage is significant because it reflects a double displacement. Joss talks about his father instead of himself and then says even his father's story could be any Black man's story. This double displacement removes Joss further from the reader's gaze and denies us direct access to him. Second, the passage is also important because in it, Kay provides a subtle allusion to Langston Hughes's famous poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," reinforcing rhetorically the notion of diasporic identity. Hughes's poem is about racial connections across time and space. The experience of being an immigrant and the difficulties of acculturation within discriminatory spaces becomes a way to think about the social and psychical dilemmas of Black existence across geographies. The implicit reference asserts an affiliation between the departed Joss and his adopted Black son in the absence of a blood relation. In addition, there are references to the racism John Moore experiences as well as to how the loss of his father deeply impacted Joss. Like Canada, Scotland has a public narrative of racism being absent from the social realm, as Neil Davidson and Satnam Virdee explain.⁴⁴ However, the novel rejects this understanding of racial discrimination in the nation. Left with his White mother in Scotland, Joss felt incredibly isolated. He comments on the difficulty of being a person of African descent in a Scottish town.

Much of the letter concerns the struggle for a stable sense of a Black identity in the context of European culture, the pressures of immigration, and Joss's desire to be closer to his father as a child. These are precisely the primary anxieties that Colman has. Joss's letter does not explain his sense of identity, but it does forge a connection to his son by discussing the apprehensions that he feels the men share. He ends the letter by addressing Colman directly: "I've told you everything" (277). Of course, Joss has not shared "everything"; in fact, he has not disclosed that which Colman and the reader might have wanted to know about the most. With this move, Kay rejects the idea that the letter must serve as a device of exposure, like the death certificate, and declines to reveal more-intimate details about Joss's life. This document symbolically pushes against the revelatory effect of the death certificate. If the latter exposes, the former shields. The retort to the medical opening of the body created through the certificate is the closing off of subjective space through a personal document. The point is not that death certificates should not register characteristics, such as race or sex; instead, I point out how institutions and their instruments can and do injure nonnormative subjects in myriad ways.

Writing here works as symbolic shielding, which involves creating interior space for desire and identity. With the letter, Kay presents an example of an

autopoietic narrative in that Joss uses the document to generate space for his identity. In my discussion of Duiker's *Quiet Violence of Dreams*, I maintain that Tshepo changes his name in the shadowy space of Steamy Windows to challenge the way that his diagnosis impacted his life. Joss also changes his name. He makes the point that he, his father, and Colman have all gone through name changes: his father and Colman because they were adopted and Joss as a way to register his male identity (276). In addition to using an act of naming to seek freedom, Joss uses an act of narrative to resist the public defining of his life and identity. Through the letter, Joss writes his way to a personal freedom, reminding us of Reg's writing in prison, as described in chapter 3. In death, Joss's writing supplements and complements the freedom he found in his intimate life with Millie.

C. Riley Snorton's analysis of the history of Black transgender identity helps us to make further sense of Kay's use of the letter as a narrative device. In discussing Lucy Hicks Anderson's refusal, while on trial for impersonating a woman, to answer the question of whether or not she had male sex organs, Snorton explains, "Hicks Anderson's refusal, her unwillingness to cooperate with or corroborate prosecutorial logics, represents another deployment of the polyvalence of shadows, namely that sometime—on those occasions when 'sovereignty is more precious than liberty'—silence becomes *countermythological*."⁴⁵ In Snorton's reading, Hicks Anderson's demurral sheds light on the value of being hidden and not exposing. Kay's decision to have Joss refuse to tell similarly represents the "polyvalence of shadows," the idea that there is possibility in being elusive and hidden. The letter protects Joss and instantiates the idea of the shadow as a space of protection that works in a similar way to Moten's blur discussed in relation to Duiker's novel.⁴⁶ Joss claims a sovereignty over his life and body in his denial of the desire to know, even when that desire comes from someone that he loves. Joss's writing in the letter, his symbolic "mastery of language" in Stryker's terms, becomes a means to this personal sovereignty. It is "countermythological" in that it seeks to unseat the collective investment in the constricting mythos of gender and undermine the invasive claim of knowing by seeing. Snorton's work on transgender historiography moves beyond a consideration of the materiality of the body and, instead, highlights the narrative of the body or how the body is crafted through narrative discourse. Similarly, Kay resists sharing intimate knowledge of Joss's body in the final moments of the novel. She presents a narrative of Joss's life that pinpoints shaping events that emphasizes fluidity and displacement. Kay offers narrative in place of views of bodily materiality. She models in fiction a historical method that Snorton cites as elemental to dislodging the "phallicized scopophilia"—to use Stryker's language—of

looking at the nonnormative body. Snorton's critical strategy parallels Kay's literary one. In his letter, Joss tells Colman, "I am leaving myself to you" (277). He leaves himself as he constructs it through narrative, but further details about his body and his desires are kept private and out of view from Colman and the reader. Kay presents desire—whether desire for Millie or desire for gender expression—by not overexposing it. *Trumpet* is a narrative that resists the narrative presentation of desire.

This erection of a narrative screen for desire and identity that reveals as it conceals elucidates how Joss is crafted as a *fugitive* subject. Chapter 2 argues that Dionne Brand's tracking of immigration and other forms of movement allows her characters in the novel *In Another Place, Not Here* to become fugitive in that they refuse to be tied to place, reject being seen in deterministic ways, and claim an agency in this rebellious movement. Joss is also fugitive in that he willfully eludes our desires to know and will not consent to demands made on his body. Like Brand's character Verlia, Joss dies, but he also does so in a way that accrues *subjective power*. His evasion is an expression of fugitive subjectivity. He circumvents the injury of exposure of the nonnormative body by preempting complete exposure. Such fugitive movement is also a way to protect his intimate life. Similar to Brand's novel, injury becomes the specific context for articulating life and queer willfulness.

Even in the context of this strategic concealing, over the course of *Trumpet*, what is revealed is the erotic circuit of desire between Joss and Millie; however, it is revealed as a secret. Early on, Milly asserts, "We have our love and we have our secret" (29). The desire gets connected to secrecy. Because Joss's assigned sex is unknown to most people, parts of their relationship are concealed. There are peeks into intimate moments between them in the novel, but the narrative rarely shows their intimacy.⁴⁷ We are made aware of the currents of desire that unite them but are not regularly allowed to see behind their bedroom door. This occlusion of desire protects it from an invasive viewing. Kay chooses a different tack than Duiker or the other writers this book discusses, who actively show and instrumentalize desire. The showing of intimacy and desire may verge on supporting and perpetuating the kind of violence enacted by the medical gaze. Rather than using desire explicitly to negotiate institutional control and injury, Kay protects it to defy institutional power. The novel like Joss's letter works through the logic of refusal in support of the nonnormative subject. The reader encounters a closed subject, meaning one that refuses to be made available. The construction of Joss's character acknowledges the pressure of institutional power that relies upon the logic of exposure yet also reflects a method that seeks to resist this logic.

As mentioned above, Frank explains that in reaction to the experience of illness, “selves are truly unmade.” This unmaking is the result not only of the destabilizing impact of illness but also the result of our encounters with the medical establishment, in general. In response to this persistent medical unmaking, Kay offers a narrative remaking of a subject through an autopoietic gesture. She offers the reader the fictional Joss while refusing to give us all of him. This dual strategy of placing and displacing is her method for presenting queer identity and desire while also protecting the integrity and interiority of that identity from public attention. This strategy calls to mind Lorde’s claim of being both victim and survivor, subject to injury and capable of evading injury. Kay recognizes the need for Joss’s story while also arguing for the need for privacy (protection from public exposure) even for the dead. She, like Duiker, is concerned about those subjects to whom privacy is readily denied by institutions and their representatives. If the shadows of institutions register their power and influence, it is in the shadows that both queer desire and identity can be nourished and sustained even though there are no guarantees to safety or survival.

In the face of institutional manipulation, Duiker has his protagonist turn to another institution to reinforce institutions’ neglect and abuse of the Black queer body. Kay moves in a different direction in suggesting that narrative might be a more productive way to negotiate the near-constant presence of injury for Black queers. Similarly, it is to narrative and art that cultural producers, such as the contributors to *Blackheart 2* and Reginald Hall from the previous chapter, turn to defy circuits of oppressive power and insist on being more than just bodies in spaces on injury. In the final analysis, perhaps it is this turn to narrative that offers a way to elude the mobility of institutionally imposed constraint and propose a route toward the space we might call Black queer freedom.

CONCLUSION

Lives of Constraint, Paths to Freedom

Our lives are always sensationalized,
rarely understood. [. . .] Our lives are
not just what make the newspaper
headlines every time one of us is
attacked. We go through many stages,
we express many identities, which
unfold in parallel in our existence.

—Zanele Muholi, “Faces and Phases”

Throughout, *Black Queer Freedom* has explored a recurring back-and-forth between the possibility of freedom and the risk of injury that I believe characterizes Black queer experience throughout the diaspora. Non-normative identities and means of expression can become the basis for feelings of liberation and empowered difference, but they also introduce risk for individuals in the social world and at home. Elsewhere, I have referred to this experience of dual possibilities as “queer contingency.”¹ The conclusion turns to that formulation here because it provides a language for the dialectical movement between desire and injury that the previous chapters have been tracking. Contingency describes a constant state of uncertainty that derives from the transgression of the protocols of gender expression and sexual desire. The simultaneity of vulnerability and empowerment and the uncertainty of which will prevail at any given moment constitute the terrain of queer contingency. In his assessment of the challenges of queer life, cultural critic Phillip Brian Harper explains, “Because [racial and sexual] minority experience is characterized by the uncertainty [. . .], we basically stake our lives and we take our chances, hoping that we haven’t miscalculated the risk.”² Harper understands the lives of sexual minorities as the constant negotia-

tion of risk in the social world and in places we might consider to be safe or spaces of refuge. This chance taking follows queer bodies across time and space—whether walking along the street, traveling to other countries, seeking treatment, or dealing with protocols of institutional spaces of any stripe. Contingency is a larger framework for understanding my organizational focus in part 1 on threatened bodies in motion and in part 2 on bodies in spaces of injury. Movement through physical space and movement through institutions are characterized by a chance taking in regard to the Black queer body within the diasporic imaginary. Being an injury-bound subject means existing within the space of contingency and indeterminacy. The value of the framework of contingency is precisely the emphasis on the unknown. Being bound by injury can mean pain, humiliation, or death, but that is not all that it must mean. Contingency leaves open space for evasion along with play, pleasure, and desire within the context of threat. Contingency creates the opportunity for identity and interiority, and it is artists who recognize the potential for possibilities in this fluctuating aperture.

Cultural productions attend to the possibilities that linger within spaces of injury and interrupted movements. Artists offer queer subjects *aesthetic redress* or paths to freedom and pleasure that imagine ways through but that never fully move beyond threat. Through varying strategies, artists both document and highlight threats, which may go unseen and ignored, while also indicating the limited capacities of threat and the potential emergence of desire to offset temporarily the presence of injury. The duration of reading a poem or novel, watching a play or viewing a film, seeing a painted canvas or photograph—or similar opportunities to engage artistic productions—offers a kind of autonomy and emotional release. Such liberating pleasure goes beyond that which the state apparatus and its political instruments can secure—even if those experiences are unenduring or unstable. In making this point, I take inspiration from Wahneema Lubiano's assessment of the value of popular culture and artistic expression over and above the formal political realm.³ My emphasis on aesthetic redress in place of legal or political redress is a response to Wendy Brown's critique of progressive articulations of freedom that inadvertently reify the state by making calls for justice through the mechanisms of the state—the entity that creates the context for, if not cause of, the very acts of injury from which one needs release. I also build upon Sarah Jane Cervenak's assertion that individuals who face social constraint and limitation may turn to mental and philosophical roaming as a mode of freedom.⁴ In light of work of these three feminist thinkers, I think about the realm of the aesthetic as a valuable site of social remediation. Aesthetic redress means acknowledging the limits on state-sanctioned

addressing of grievances, but it also means embracing the temporary and unstable as moments or flashes of the freedom that one hopes to see realized in the sociopolitical domain. There is pleasure to be had in imagining paths to freedom that are kept out of view in our lived circumstances. The material reality of queer injury across time and space encourages artists to call for new worlds, imagine embodied defiance, claim a freedom in desire, and insist on self-definition even in death. Art functions as a means of aesthetic presence and an expression of queer identity that unfolds alongside and, perhaps, in defiance of the facts of our lived existence. Through artistic redress, artists reveal those apertures that help us locate moments of freedom in restriction.

My repeated use of the word *aperture* is purposeful because I frame my brief remarks in this conclusion with the comments of South African photographer and filmmaker Zanele Muholi. An aperture, the variable opening through which light enters the camera, is a marvelous metaphor for art, generally, and Muholi's work, specifically. By opening or closing, this device determines the amount of light that reaches the film or the camera's digital sensors. Through the photographer's manipulation of the aperture, objects can be made brighter or darker, images can be put into focus or taken out of focus, and dimension and complexity may be added or taken away.⁵ This mechanical function, which revolves around strategies of focus and depth, describes the symbolic work done by art. The works of Muholi and the other artists discussed in *Black Queer Freedom* focus on dynamics of queer injury and situate such threats within the field that is queer life, providing dimension and complexity where there otherwise might only be darkness and obscurity. Within these depths, we can see how desire becomes a valuable refuge from ubiquitous injury. It is through the aperture-like work of artists, such as Muholi, that one comes to recognize the possibilities within aesthetic redress.

Many of Muholi's photographs are concerned with imaging the injury-bound subject, here lesbians who have faced violence and discrimination, and with proffering an aesthetic presence to the women she photographs. She explores the manifestations of social threat while enabling the presentation of a subject position not rooted merely in injury. In describing her work, Muholi remarks, "Our lives are always sensationalized, rarely understood. [. . .] Our lives are not just what make the newspaper headlines every time one of us is attacked. We go through many stages, we express many identities, which unfold in parallel in our existence."⁶ It is the multiple elements of life (some good, some bad) to which she wants to draw attention. This book closes with her words to emphasize how art conveys queer contingency and addresses the simplification and abstraction of Black queer life. Her work from the solo exhibit *Only Half the Picture* and the ongoing serial exhibition

Faces and Phases illustrate her interests in gender and sexual discrimination. South African writer Nonkululeko Godana explains how Muholi has spent years “documenting (through photography and qualitative interviews) stories of lesbian abuse in Gauteng townships.”⁷ Muholi consults extensively with each subject of her photographs and gets her permission about what will be shot and what will be in the frame, meaning that we can think about her subjects as subject-collaborators. One well-known photograph, *Aftermath* (2004), features a woman standing in her underwear covering herself in a protective stance. The woman is a rape survivor who also has scars from other experiences of violence. Other pieces show the quotidian lives of the women in the communities and the everyday pleasure and labors of “living as a lesbian,” to use Cheryl Clarke’s words. For example, *Mamu* (2006) captures the backs of two women holding hands and wearing similar outfits (fatigue shorts and sneakers), and *Zol* (2002) shows a woman whose right half of her face is hidden by cannabis (*zol*) smoke and who with her left eye calmly gazes at the viewer. The camera tries to shed light on the lives and bodies of these women, women who have faced violent public attention historically and in the present moment. Journalist Gail Smith insists that the purpose of Muholi’s work is to “get beyond what lesbians do in bed and to confront key issues, such as the lack of ownership gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people feel over their voices, their personal spaces and in places where they live, learn and work.”⁸ Muholi tries to get “beyond” by showing us that which is obscured by our desire to know about and control female sexuality.

Muholi’s work in photography is significant because of the use of the medium itself in the development of the South African nation-state. Historically, photography is linked to the establishing of the system of apartheid as well as the racial ideologies that underpinned it. Art critic and curator Okwui Enwezor argues that “a truly South African photography emerged with the formation and consolidation of the apartheid state” and that photography “came to occupy a central discursive space in the documentation of apartheid.”⁹ Art historian Michael Godby tracks the history of White photographers in the mid-twentieth century helping to attend to the “native question,” meaning the role of African peoples in the modern state, through circulating images of black South Africans. One example is the work of A. M. Duggan-Cronin, who took pictures of Bantu communities over a number of decades. Godby explains how Duggan-Cronin “routinely manipulated the material culture in his scenes, removing all European goods and introducing African artifacts, including some that he had collected elsewhere. [. . .] When Duggan-Cronin needed to photograph male subjects—for example, he seems to have wanted to include a portrait of a chief in each volume—he

is recorded to have persuaded them to change their Western clothes for supposedly traditional garb, often a leopard skin that he had brought with him, whether or not such apparel was historically accurate.”¹⁰ Such methods of photographic manipulation have more to do with colonialist desires and presumptions than actual communities. Even though one might see in his methods a concern about the loss of traditional cultures in the face of industrialization and urbanization, his photographs encourage a system of spatial and cultural separation for the “good” of Black South African culture, thereby supporting the foundational logic of apartheid. Enwezor also notes that photography does become a key element of anti-apartheid struggle as artists develop strategies for struggle photography with the hope of ending inequalities (34). Given this history, one realizes that photography as medium is a contested site in regard to Black South African identity and citizenship because photography has been used as a device of injury as well as one to counteract injury. Photography is a technological space of historical injury that some artists have chosen to navigate. Muholi’s art is all the more powerful for her decision to work in and through a medium of historic injury. Muholi enters that space of injury and seeks to redefine it by placing the Black queer female body prominently within it.

I see Muholi’s body of work, especially that collected in *Only Half the Picture* and in the serial *Faces and Phases*, as photographic invitations to look and invitations to be gazed upon.¹¹ We are invited to look upon the bodies, private spaces, and intimacies of those who have experienced emotional, physical, and social violence *because of* their bodies and desires. We are invited to appreciate, feel connection to, and perhaps even feel desire for these women. The idea of an invitation stands in contradistinction to an aggressive and forceful showing and is distinct from the manipulative exposure by photographers such as Duggan-Cronin. It cannot necessarily preempt or cancel out such forcefulness, but it prevents this violence from being all that we know about these women. We are invited to understand that violence and aggression are only half of the picture. An invitation is also about agency and power. Muholi and her subject-collaborators decide what is shown and what is not and what if anything we are allowed to see. Her work manifests a kind of control for the artist and arguably the women she shares with the world. Muholi herself explains, “These are not only subjects, these are my people, this [photographic work] describes the person I am.”¹² She connects herself to the women in her photographic exhibitions and ultimately shows the viewer the most private parts of herself. One might feel as if the intimate nature of many of the photographs makes the women vulnerable visually given the long history of troublesome representations of Black women’s bod-

ies across countries and continents. However, Muholi's work suggests that there is power in vulnerability, in making oneself vulnerable as opposed to being made to be vulnerable. What we are invited to see are women allowing themselves to be seen. Through the work of the camera, we are asked in to see them control their own representations. Through her multiple series, Muholi captures and conveys freedom of bodily movement. Such movement articulates a Black queerness that is at ease even as the photographs sometimes subtly and sometimes explicitly also document realities of violence and abuse.

Many of the subjects in the photographs, especially in *Faces and Phases*, look unsmilingly out at the viewer. The viewing audience is looked upon in this series. These portraits do not capture a set of defiant gazes. Instead, what we see are looks of acknowledgment. They are faces looking out seeking to be acknowledged—simply to be seen while also acknowledging the fact of being seen. Accordingly, we are not only invited to see but we are also invited to acknowledge and be acknowledged. The gazes call for recognition and reciprocity. With these ideas that undergird her work, Muholi provides a visual framework for social belonging and cultural citizenship even as civic and human rights are violated. Muholi's serial photographic invitations represent the ultimate form of artistic redress. She offers a space for subjectivity for these women to counter the acts of interruptions that sought to strip away their humanity and processes of exposure that sought to put their bodies on display against their will. Artists such as Muholi do not give up on the possibilities of legal redress for queer populations; instead, they point out how the legal path might not be the only or preferred path to doing justice to the complexity of queer identity. An aesthetic presence might matter as much as a civic one. Aesthetic redress often dwells on the significance of pleasure, desire, and self-love within spaces of injury, as we can see in works as disparate as Big Freedia's bounce music and Muholi's photographic series. By moving across forms and space, we begin to see the Black queer body unfold in its many stages and identities. Art's ability to give the queer body the space to unfold in many directions might be the space of freedom most readily at hand.

NOTES

Introduction: Freedom in Restriction

1. See Jonathan Dee, “New Orleans Gender-Bending Rap,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 22, 2010.

2. Big Freedia and Nicole Balin, *God Save the Queen Diva!* (New York: Gallery, 2015), 172. Big Freedia explains that the Mapouka dance is the cultural predecessor to twerking and bounce-related dances.

3. Throughout this book I use the term *queer* as a collective noun for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people and as a modifier signaling same-sex desire and gender nonconformity.

4. Abdul R. JanMohamed, *The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology of Death* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005).

5. JanMohamed emphasizes the male body. Much of the discourse around social death implicitly focuses on male bodies and interactions between men. There are examples of critical work that does not limit itself to thinking about social death as a masculine formation. My essay “Staging Social Death” explicitly seeks to think about the relationship between social-death discourse and Black feminist theory. One may or may not link Christina Sharpe’s work to Afro-pessimism, but at the very least one can think of her as offering a feminist reformulation of many of the ideas that thinkers, such as Jared Sexton and Frank Wilderson, put forward. One might go so far as to say that she critiques and expands Afro-pessimism from within. In addition, Calvin Warren’s chapter on experimentation of enslaved Black women also does the work of thinking about feminist thought and women’s bodies in a critical conversation about social death. See GerShun Avilez, “Staging Social Death,” in *The Psychic Hold of Slavery*, ed. Soyica Diggs Colbert, Aida Levy-Hussen, and Robert Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2016), 107–24; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake* (Durham: Duke UP, 2017); and Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror* (Durham: Duke UP, 2018).

6. I am purposefully alluding to Roderick A. Ferguson's book *One-Dimensional Queer* (2018), which takes issue with the historiographical erasure of complexity and multidimensionality in the history and public narratives of queer activism.

7. Darius Bost, *Evidence of Being: The Black Gay Cultural Renaissance and the Politics of Violence* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2019).

8. Marlon M. Bailey, "Black Gay (Raw) Sex," in *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson (Durham: Duke UP, 2016), 239–61; emphasis added. Bailey develops his ideas through the work of Lyndon Gill and M. Jacqui Alexander.

9. See Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York: New York UP, 2018).

10. See Jean-Ulrick Désert, "Queer Space," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay, 1997), 17–26.

11. See Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York UP, 2005).

12. See GerShun Avilez, "Cartographies of Desire," *Callaloo* 34.1 (2001): 126–42, and *Radical Aesthetics and Modern Black Nationalism* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2016).

13. See Warren, *Ontological Terror*.

14. See Warren, *Ontological Terror*; Jared Sexton, "The Social Life of Social Death," *InTensions* 5 (2011): 1–47; and Frank Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010).

15. See Melvin Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1987); Thadious M. Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2012); Stéphane Robolin, *Grounds of Engagement: Apartheid-Era African American and South African Writing* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2015); and Rashad Shabazz, *Spatializing Blackness: Architectures of Confinement and Black Masculinity in Chicago* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2015).

16. See Neil Smith, "Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale," *Social Text* 33 (1992): 54–81, and "Spaces of Vulnerability: The Space of Flows and the Politics of Scale," *Critique of Anthropology* 16.1 (1996): 63–77.

17. Smith, "Contours," 66.

18. Treva Ellison, "The Strangeness of Progress and the Uncertainty of Blackness," in Johnson, *No Tea, No Shade*, 340.

19. Ellison's gender pronouns are they/them/their.

20. Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke UP, 2015), 10.

21. See Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008).

22. In *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), the US Supreme Court struck down a Texas

sodomy law. The case provided juridical groundwork for making sexual privacy a constitutional right.

23. In *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), the US Supreme Court ruled same-sex marriage a constitutionally protected right.

24. One only has to consider the fatal circumstances of Sakia Gunn, David Kato, and Brian Williamson, for example. The list of names is seemingly endless.

25. See Phillip Brian Harper, *Private Affairs: Critical Ventures in the Culture of Social Relations* (New York: New York UP, 1999).

26. See Elizabeth Alexander, *The Black Interior* (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2004).

27. See Wendy Brown, *States of Injury* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995).

28. Freedia and Balin, *God Save the Queen Diva*, 161.

29. Nadia Ellis, *Territories of the Soul: Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora* (Durham: Duke UP, 2015), 6.

30. Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*; Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003); Rinaldo Walcott, *Black like Who? Writing Black Canada* (1997; Toronto: Insomniac, 2003; citations are to the 2003 edition); and Michelle Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005).

31. I borrow the language here from Smith's discussion of the politics of scale. Thinking in terms of diaspora necessarily means thinking in terms of scale. See Smith, "Contours," 66.

32. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*.

33. Historically, minority communities throughout the Black diaspora have created networks and organizations in support of themselves because of repressive state regimes, systematic discrimination, histories of inequality, and threats of social erasure: Other Countries, the Combahee River Collective, Gay Men of African Descent, Sistren Theater Collective, Sexual Minorities Uganda, and Transgender and Intersex Africa are just a few of these artistic and/or activist organizations. These are the kinds of "institutions" that do not appear to get taken up in my analysis—ostensibly, ones that are less potentially damaging than the state-backed hospitals and detention centers that I do examine.

34. Both of these sites are mentioned in Michel Foucault's description of heterotopias. Although it might be useful to define both as heterotopias, I do not use this concept as the dominant framework in my analysis. I am less interested in providing a theorization of the nature of the spaces themselves (as heterotopias) than in coming to terms with the social dynamics within those spaces and how individual queer characters come to understand themselves—granting that the first understanding informs the latter.

35. Important exceptions include critics Dennis Childs, Russell Robinson, and Dean Spade, who are discussed in chap. 3.

36. See Harriet Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Ex-*

perimentation on Black Colonial Times to the Present (New York: Doubleday, 2007); Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2011), and *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome* (New York: Beacon, 2016); and Keith Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle-Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2001), and *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

Chapter 1. Movement in Black: Queer Bodies and the Desire for Spatial Justice

1. James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street*, in Baldwin, *Collected Essays* (1972; New York: Library of America, 1998).

2. See Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness*; Davis, *Southscapes*; and Robolin, *Grounds of Engagement*, for extended explanation of how considerations of space undergird African American literary production.

3. US Constitution, *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>; emphasis added. Clay Risen explains how legislators chose to use the commerce clause instead of the equal protections clause of the Fourteenth Amendment because the latter had been used as the foundation for Reconstruction-era civil rights legislation. See Clay Risen, *The Bill of the Century* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

4. US House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee No. 5, *Miscellaneous Proposals regarding the Civil Rights of Persons within the Jurisdiction of the United States*, 88th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1963), 2:1374.

5. One of the most recognizable visual images of the civil rights movement is the sit-in. During the spring of 1960, sit-ins and their analogues around the country increased and included “stand-ins at theaters refusing to sell tickets to blacks; wade-ins at municipal pools and segregated beaches; pray-ins at Jim Crow churches.” The critique that these activities materialize has to do with the freedom of movement through the public realm. Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945–1982*, 2nd ed. (1984; Jackson: University of Mississippi P, 2007), 62.

6. Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).

7. The idea of publicly funded spaces of commerce is highly inclusive, as businesses—even privately owned corporations—with any kind of a contractual relationship with the government contract may be subject to regulation.

8. The shooting of James Meredith in 1966 and the murder of James Byrd Jr. in 1998 remind us that streets in more-rural areas are also dangerous.

9. I, like many other African American scholars and critical race studies scholars, maintain the use of words other than *riots* when talking about these impactful events so as not to obscure the thoughtful agency of the actors or present them as primarily destructive through connotation.

10. Fred Shapiro and James Sullivan, *Race Riots: New York, 1964* (New York: Crowell, 1964), 4.

11. See Janet Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007); Shapiro and Sullivan, *Race Riots*.

12. Kevin Mumford, *Newark* (New York: New York UP, 2007), 125.

13. The document has thirty images.

14. A similar argument can be made about the 1968 riot in Washington, DC. See Kwame Holmes, "Beyond the Flames: Queering the History of the 1968 D.C. Riot," in Johnson, *No Tea, No Shade*, 304–22.

15. Bayard Rustin, "A Negro Leader Defines: A Way Out of an Exploding Ghetto," *New York Times*, August 13, 1967, 200; emphasis added.

16. Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010).

17. Hereafter, Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos will be referred to as Philippopoulos.

18. Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice: Body, Lawscape, Atmosphere* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

19. See Dorothy Roberts, "Race, Vagueness, and the Social Meaning of Order-Maintaining Policies," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 89.3 (1999): 775–836.

20. One can easily make the argument that a public display of affection (PDA) is not acceptable, but queer PDA quickly leads to questions of morality.

21. See Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003).

22. This discussion emphasizes the use of documentary methodologies among African American artists, but I recognize the complicated histories of documentary projects and Black communities throughout the diaspora. One might consider Toni Cade Bambara's 1971 short story "Blues Ain't No Mockingbird," which features a White man recording a Black family at home without their permission. See Bambara, *Gorilla, My Love* (New York: Vintage, 1972). In short, documentary and ethnographic projects have been used to represent Black communities while also silencing them by controlling the images and words of these people as well as the processes of circulation. I am talking about the ethics that surround documentary and documentary projects when an individual (most often with social and cultural capital) seeks to record or document a community to which they do not belong. Part of the impetus behind the interest in "documentary" art during the 1960s is the desire for Black people to do the work of recording the complexities of their lives before and counter to White attempts to do so.

23. Gil Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox: A Collection of Black Poems* (New York: World, 1970).

24. See Daniel Punday, "The Black Arts Movement and the Genealogy of Multimedia," *New Literary History* 37.4 (2006): 777–94.

25. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–70* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983), 231.

26. Roderick Ferguson argues that the Stonewall Uprising should be read as a

culmination of years of antiracist and coalitional activism. See Ferguson, *One-Dimensional Queer* (New York: Polity, 2018).

27. See Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995); Christina Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke UP, 2013).

28. See Rudy Grillo, "Out of the Closet and into the Streets," essay, no. 3, folder 15, box 1, Rudy Grillo Collection, LGBT Community Center National History Archive, The Center, New York City, New York.

29. Samuel Delany uses contact as his primary component of his theorization of sociality in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York UP, 1999).

30. Cheryl Clarke, *Living as a Lesbian* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand, 1986).

31. Ellison, "Strangeness of Progress," 326. Ellison uses the terminology *carceral geography* to describe the prison-industrial complex as well as forms and modes that appropriate such means of domination and control.

32. US Supreme Court, Roger Brooke Taney, John H. Van Evrie, and Samuel A. Cartwright, *The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney* (New York: Van Evrie, 1860), 33, *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/17001543/>. The opinion was delivered in 1857 but published in 1860.

33. "Voting Rights," *Chicago Defender*, February 20, 1965, 8, col. 1.

34. Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants* (New York: Oxford, 2004).

35. Pat Parker, *The Complete Works of Pat Parker*, ed. Julie R. Enszer (Brookville, NY: Sinister Wisdom, 2016).

36. See Judy Gahan, "Coming On Strong: A Legacy of Pat Parker," in Parker, *Complete Works*, 15–21; and Mecca Sullivan, introduction to *Sister Love: The Letters of Audre Lorde and Pat Parker* (New York: Midsummer Night's, 2018), 11–24.

37. That Parker's poetic output is in part stimulated by these murders, which have racial and sexual motivations behind them, aligns her work with that of the Combahee River Collective. The members of the collective brought attention to the murders of Black women. See Terrion Williamson, "Why Did They Die: On Combahee and the Serialization of Black Death," *Souls* 19.3 (2017): 328–41.

38. See Phillip Brian Harper's discussion of the "we" and the "you" in Black Arts-era poetry in *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* (New York: New York UP, 1998).

39. Huey Newton, "A Letter from Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation," *Black Panther*, August 21, 1970. Ronald Porter provides a valuable assessment of the letter in "A Rainbow in Black: The Gay Politics of the Black Panther Party," *Counterpoints* 367 (2012): 364–75.

40. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1967; New York: Vintage, 1992).

41. The poem was also published as "It's a Simple Dream."

42. Pat Parker, *Movement in Black: The Collected Poetry of Pat Parker, 1961–1978* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing, 1983).

43. Clarke, "Goat Child and Cowboy: Pat Parker as Queer Trickster," in *An Expanded Edition of Movement in Black* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand, 1999), 19.

44. Stagecoach Mary (Mary Fields) was the first woman contract mail carrier in the United States, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was a nineteenth-century abolitionist and author, Fannie Lou Hamer was a leader of the twentieth-century civil rights movement and women's health activist, Marian Anderson was a celebrated twentieth-century singer and figure for civil rights activism, Barbara Jordan was an important lawyer and politician, and Audre Lorde was a significant feminist poet and social activist.

45. Philippopoulos, *Spatial Justice* 41; original emphasis.

Chapter 2. Geographies of Risk:

Migratory Subjects and the Uncertainty of Travel

1. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977; New York: Vintage, 2004), 114.

2. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 44.

3. I build on Carole Boyce Davies's exploration of migratory subjectivities and the deft negotiations Black women make as they redefine their sense of identity in relation to place. See Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

4. Linda McDowell, "Spatializing Feminism," in *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 1996), 31.

5. For discussion of the relationship between space and place, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977).

6. See Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship, and the Politics of Place* (New York: Oxford UP, 2015), and Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*.

7. Between 1900 and 1960, there were about 21,500 immigrants from Caribbean nations to Canada. Barrington Walker, *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2008).

8. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005), 7.

9. See Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Talks with Working-Class West Indian Women about Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto: Williams-Wallace, 1983; Toronto: Sister Vision, 1995). Citations are to the Sister Vision edition.

10. Austin Clarke, "A Black Man Talks about Race Prejudice in White Canada," *MacLeans*, April 20, 1963, 18.

11. Bridget Anderson, "The Magic of Migration, Immigration Controls and Subjectivities: The Case of Au Pairs and Domestic Worker Visa Holders," in *When Care Work Goes Global: Locating the Social Relations of Domestic Work*, ed. Mary Romero, Valerie Preston, and Wenona Giles (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 80.

12. Francis Henry, "The West Indian Domestic Scheme in Canada," *Social and Economic Studies Journal* 17.1 (1968): 84. The nurse remains unnamed.

13. For debates around the notion of feminist ethnography, see Kamala Visweswaran, "Histories of Feminist Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 591–621; Lila Abu-Lughod, "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women and Performance* 5.1 (1990): 7–27; and Radha Hegde, "Fragments and Interruptions: Sensory Regimes of Violence and the Limits of Feminist Ethnography," *Qualitative Inquiry* 15.2 (2009): 276–96.

14. Silvera, *Silenced*, 5.

15. Jenny Burnham makes the point that although landed status appears to grant one rights and civic stability, still, a large amount of precarity accompanies gaining landed status. Accordingly, landed status did not and does not secure the kind of protections that the law alleges. Burnham, "Deportable or Admissible? Black Women and the Space of 'Removal,'" in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007), 177–92.

16. Bakan and Stasiulis, *Negotiating Citizenship*, 14.

17. Silvera, *Silenced*, 33.

18. See Harper, *Private Affairs*, 1–32.

19. Burnham, "Deportable or Admissible?," 185.

20. See McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*; Walcott, *Black like Who*; Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax, CA: Fernwood, 2017).

21. See Claudia Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women!" *Political Affairs* (June 1949): 4.

22. See Paul March-Russell, *The Short Story* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009); Charles E. May, *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1994).

23. See Burnham, "Deportable or Admissible?"; Erica Lawson, "The Gendered Working Lives of Seven Jamaican Women in Canada: A Story about 'Here' and 'There' in a Transnational Economy," *Feminist Formations* 25.1 (2013): 138–56.

24. See Lawson, "Gendered Working Lives."

25. Makeda Silvera, "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians," in *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*, ed. Thomas Glave (Durham: Duke UP, 2008), 344–54.

26. Nancy Duncan, "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces," in *Bodyspace*, ed. Nancy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 1996), 129.

27. Dionne Brand, *Another Place, Not Here* (New York: First Grove, 1996).

28. Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario* (Toronto: Women's, 1991).

29. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Acts* 26 (2008): 3.

30. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 3.

31. See Raphael Dalleo, "Post-Grenada, Post-Cuba, Postcolonial: Rethinking Revolutionary Discourse in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*," *Interventions* 12.1 (2010): 64–73.

32. Laurie Lambert, "The Sovereignty of the Imagination: Poetic Authority and the Fiction of North Atlantic Universals in Dionne Brand's *Chronicles of a Hostile Sun*," *Cultural Dynamics* 26.2 (2014): 174.

33. See Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005).

34. This understanding resonates with Brent Hayes Edwards's conception of diaspora. See Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*.

35. See Margot Canady, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009), and "Thinking Sex in the Transnational Turn," *American Historical Review* 114.5 (2009): 1250–57; and Elizabeth Povinelli, *Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006).

36. Kristina Quynn, "Elsewheres of Diaspora: Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*," *Journal of Midwest Modern Language Association* 48.1 (2015): 121–22.

37. Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism* 50.2 (2008): 177–218.

38. Moten in *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke UP, 2017) continues this line of thought.

39. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Spill* (Durham: Duke UP, 2016).

40. Vikki Visvis provides a compelling argument about how the framework of trauma structures the narrative in the resonances of trauma in "Traumatic Forgetting and Spatial Consciousness in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*," *Mosaic* 45.3 (2012): 115–31.

41. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003).

42. Boyce Davies, *Caribbean Spaces*, 90.

43. Michelle Commander offers a thorough examination of flight imagery in Black diasporic literary and social culture in *Afro-Atlantic Flight: Speculative Returns and the Black Fantastic* (Durham: Duke UP, 2017).

44. In his brilliant reading of Brand's novel, literary scholar Matt Richardson connects the character of Adela from *In Another Place* to the flying African myth. See Richardson, *The Queer Limit of Black Memory: Black Lesbian Literature and Irresolution* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2013), 144.

45. Actual historical incidents, such as the mass suicide at Igbo Landing in 1803, help to contribute to this idea of willful turning away from enslavement.

46. Soyica Diggs Colbert, *Black Movements: Performance and Cultural Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2017), 28.

47. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End, 1990), 145–53.

Chapter 3. Uneven Vulnerability: Queer Hypervisibility and Spaces of Imprisonment

1. My understanding of institutions is indebted to Michel Foucault, especially *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977; repr., New York: Vintage, 1995), and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1963; repr., New

York: Pantheon, 1973). Although here I do critique and move away from how he thinks about prison dynamics, my thinking about the concept of institutions is in line with his general formulation.

2. See Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008).

3. Etheridge Knight, *Poems from Prison* (Detroit: Broadside, 1968).

4. Etheridge Knight, *The Essential Etheridge Knight* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1986), 19.

5. It is through this understanding that one may hear resonances with the concept of “heterotopias,” which Foucault develops. See Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22–27. Originally published in 1967.

6. Blackheart Collective, *Blackheart 2: A Journal of Writing and Graphics by Black Gay Men* (New York: Blackheart Collective, 1984), 2.

7. Take, for example, Jerome Washington, *A Bright Spot in the Yard: Notes and Stories from a Prisoner Journal* (Philadelphia: Crossings, 1981).

8. See Russell Robinson, “Masculinity as Prison: Sexual Identity, Race, and Incarceration,” *California Law Review* 99 (2011): 1309–1408; Dean Spade, “The Only Way to End Racialized Gender Violence in Prisons Is to End Prisons,” *California Law Review Circuit* 3 (2012): 184–96.

9. “The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates at the Millennium,” *Justice Policy Institute*, May 2000, <http://www.justicepolicy.org>.

10. Gilmore Wilson, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2007).

11. See Justice Policy Institute, “Punishing Decade.”

12. Joseph Beam, “Brother to Brother: Words from the Heart” in *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* (Boston: Alyson, 1986), 240. Part of the basis of this expression of revolutionary connection is the friendship that Beam had with an incarcerated Black man. Filmmaker Marlon Riggs would later use this statement prominently in *Tongues Untied* (San Francisco: Frameline, 1989), his experimental documentary film about Black gay life.

13. The *Gay Community News* (GCN) archive is held in the Broomfield Street Educational Foundation Records, Northeastern University Libraries Archives and Special Collections.

14. Kunzel also discusses how the editors of the queer-focused magazine *RFD* created a section called “Brothers behind Bars” to enable pen pals and encourage discussion of the social vulnerability of gay men. See Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 194.

15. Jack Kunsman, “Speaking Out: Prisons under the New Right,” *Gay Community News* 9.3 (1981), 5.

16. Ronald Reagan, “Politics and Morality Are Inseparable,” *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy* 7 (1985): 7–11.

17. The speech also rejects the activism of the 1960s that helped to effect the secularization of the nation, which he deems as a deficit.

18. John J. DiIulio, *Governing Prisons: A Comparative Study of Correctional Management* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

19. Roosevelt Williamson, “The Other Side of the Wall: Prison Racism and Legal Slavery in America,” *Gay Community News* 9.37 (1982), 1.

20. See Isaac Glenn Smith, “Taking It to the Street” in *Blackheart* 2, 34, and Darnell Tatum, “A System of Slavery in the Real,” in *Blackheart* 2, 38.

21. See Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories, 2003); Dennis Childs, *Slaves of the State: Black Incarceration from the Chain Gang to the Penitentiary* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2015); Ava DuVernay, *The 13th* (USA: Netflix, 2016). Stephen Dillon also tracks how activists and artists forge a connection between incarceration and enslavement in an earlier period, the 1970s, in *Fugitive Life: The Queer Politics of the Prison State* (Durham: Duke UP, 2018).

22. The Thirteenth Amendment reads: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their justification.” See US Constitution, *US National Archives and Records Administration*, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

23. See Kristine Levan, “Consensual Sex,” in *Sex in Prison: Myths and Realities*, ed. Catherine D. Marcum and Tammy L. Castle (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 2014), 13–24.

24. Jeremy Bentham develops a structural means of surveilling anyone who needs to be “kept under inspection” in his 1887 “Panopticon or the Inspection-House.”

25. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

26. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

27. Simone Brown shows how this happens even outside of official spaces of detention in *Dark Matters*.

28. Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in US Culture* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996), 26.

29. I read the number as 11171, but the third digit is actually difficult to determine.

30. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable: The Art of Kara Walker* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004), 42.

31. See Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2002); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

32. See Avilez, *Radical Aesthetics and Modern Black Nationalism* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2016), 167–79.

33. See Leanne Fital Alarid, “Sexual Orientation Perspectives of Incarcerated Bisexual and Gay Men: The County Jail Protective Custody Experience,” *Prison Journal* 80.1 (2000): 80–95.

34. See Robinson, “Masculinity as Prison.”

35. On a related note, Kunzel insists that protective custody often fails to be truly protective.

36. Angela Ards, *Words of Witness: Black Women’s Autobiography in the Post-Brown Era* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2015), 17.

37. Reginald Hall, *Memoir: Delaware County Prison* (Mountainside, NJ: Writers and poets.com, 2004), 23.

38. In my essay "Uncertain Freedom," I discuss the public scrutiny of queer men's bodies. Avilez, "Uncertain Freedom: Sylvester, RuPaul, and Black Queer Contingency," *Black Scholar* 49.2 (2019): 50–64.

39. See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: New Press, 2010); Kenneth Fasching-Varner et al., *Understanding, Dismantling, and Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017).

40. Richard Majors and Janet Billson, *Cool Pose* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 2–4.

41. Herman Beavers, "'The Cool Pose': Intersectionality, Masculinity, and Quiescence in the Comedy and Films of Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy," *Race and the Subject of Masculinities*, ed. Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel (Durham: Duke UP, 1997), 253–85; Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2012).

42. Eddie Murphy, *Raw* (Hollywood: Paramount, 1987), DVD; Aaron McGruder, *The Boondocks* (Culver City, CA: Sony, 2010), DVD.

43. "No Escape: Male Rape in US Prisons," Human Rights Watch, April 1, 2001, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/04/01/no-escape-male-rape-us-prisons>.

44. Catherine Marcum, "Examining Prison Sex Culture," in *Sex in Prison: Myths and Realities*, ed. Catherine D. Marcum and Tammy L. Castle (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 2014), 10.

45. This procedure of removing a queer or socially vulnerable individual away from general population and to solitary confinement would become one of PREA's policy recommendations.

46. One might be tempted to read the narrative presentation of Reg as a reworking of the cool pose. The author shields certain elements in order to protect the character. However, Hall's move is more of a rejection and undermining of the order the cool pose supplies rather than a reframing of it. The denial of emotion is central to the theorizing of the cool pose. Instead of denying or downplaying emotion, Hall makes emotional responses the central components of his text. The self-presentation in this memoir does not align with the cool pose as it gets theorized. At best we can see a queering of it. Furthermore, this text is about agency in the context of controlled mobility.

47. I am actually struck by the obtuseness of the description of the encounter. The two encounters have remarkably different outcomes. It might suggest the possibility of obscured violence. Perhaps, something is being intentionally left out that would undermine what I see is the larger focus on rhetorical exceptionalism in regard to the representation of Reg.

48. Levan, "Consensual Sex."

49. Reg has a notable preference for Black men with lighter complexions. One could easily critique the presentation of the character for this consciousness about color and how it participates in the social valuation of light and White skin.

50. See Shabazz, *Spatializing Blackness*.

51. One could also think about the lack of discussion of condoms as also a move to

emphasize pleasure over and against a social and public health premium on protection. See Marlon Bailey for discussion of Black men's avowal of unprotected or raw sex in "Black Gay (Raw) Sex."

52. E. Alexander, *Black Interior*, 5.

Chapter 4. The Shadow of Institutions: Medical Diagnosis and the Elusive Queer Body

1. See H. Washington, *Medical Apartheid*.
2. Robert Spitzer and Janet B. W. Williams, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: III-R* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1987).
3. World Health Organization, *International Statistical Classification of Disease and Related Health Problems*, vol. 10 (Geneva: WHO, 1992).
4. K. Sello Duiker, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (Cape Town, South Africa: Kwela, 2001).
5. Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).
6. Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (Argyle, NY: Spinster, 1980).
7. *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com, s.v. "diagnosis."
8. For a discussion of the novel, see Brenna Munro, *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012).
9. Shaun Viljoen, introduction to *Thirteen Cents*, by K. Sello Duiker (Athens: Ohio UP, 2013).
10. See Tiffany Fawn Jones, *Psychiatry, Mental Institutions, and the Mad in Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
11. The territory existed as the Union of South Africa under British rule from 1910 to 1961.
12. See N. Haysome, M. Strous, and L. Vogelmann, "The Mad Mrs. Rochester Revisited: The Involuntary Confinement of the Mentally Ill in South Africa," *South African Journal on Human Rights* 6.3 (1990): 341–62.
13. See Deborah Posel, "The Assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd: The Spectre of Apartheid's Corpse," *African Studies* 68.3 (2009): 338–39, and "The Tapeworm Murder," *Time Magazine*, October 28, 1966, 41.
14. Jacques Theodore Van Wyk, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Circumstances of the Death of the Late Dr. the Honourable Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, December 1966*, National Archives of South Africa (NASA), Pretoria, RP 16/1967, 28, (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1966), 4. See also J. H. van Rooyen, "The Psychopath in South African Criminal and Mental Health Law," *Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 9 (1976): 1–56.
15. Tsafendas is a complicated individual. He was legally White but of mixed heritage. His father was Greek, and his mother was from Mozambique. Allegedly, he feared marrying a White woman he loved for fear of producing a Black child. There is conflicting evidence that he sought to change his status from White to Coloured.

16. Haysome, Strous, and Vogelmann, "Mad Mrs. Rochester Revisited," 343–44.
17. Legal researcher Natalie McCrea insists that the act "did not have an individual rights concern"; she goes on to say, "Its primary focus was on patient control and treatment, along with the 'welfare and safety of society.'" McCrea, "An Analysis of South Africa's Mental Health Legislation." *National Law Review January* (2010), www.natlawreview.com.
18. Jonathan Kenneth Burns, "Implementation of the Mental Health Care Act," *South African Medical Journal* 98.1 (2008): 41.
19. Mental Health Act No. 18 of 1973, South African Parliament, sec. 66A, "Prohibition of Sketches and Photographs and of Publication Thereof and of False Information," <http://www.kznhealth.gov.za/mentalact1973.pdf>; emphasis added.
20. The hospital has a sordid reputation. "Valkenberg: A Site of Healing?" *Independent Online News (IOL)*, April 10, 2014.
21. Duiker, *Quiet Violence*, 145–46.
22. In late 2018 the South African Constitutional Court made it legal for adults to grow and consume cannabis in their own homes.
23. Abuse of Dependence-Producing Substance and Rehabilitation Centres Act, *Republic of South Africa Government Gazette*, May 26, 1971, 2.
24. Niren Tolsi, "Killing the Economic Lifeblood of the Eastern Cape's Weed-Producing People," (*Cape Town, South Africa*) *Sunday Times*, March 27, 2016, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/>.
25. Robert Whittaker, *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill* (New York: Perseus, 2002). Whittaker explains how the use of these drugs became a significant part of psychiatric treatment beginning in the mid-twentieth century.
26. Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Boston: Beacon, 2009), xv, xiii.
27. Yogita Goyal discusses how Black diasporic writers turn to the images of enslavement and the narrative strategies of slave narratives to articulate contemporary social dilemmas and to craft identity in fictional and nonfictional texts. See Goyal, *Runaway Genres: The Global Afterlives of Slavery* (New York: New York UP, 2019).
28. Arthur Frank, *At the Will of the Body: Reflections on Illness* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 31.
29. Duiker, *Quiet Violence*, 171.
30. Elsewhere, I have discussed how a sense of no-placedness can be constructed for Black subjects by policy decisions and community actions and develop the idea of "no-placedness" in regard to the Black body. See Avilez, "Housing the Black Body: Value, Domestic Space, and African-American Segregation Narratives," *African American Review* 42.1 (2008): 135–47.
31. For a discussion of legal statutes and sexuality, see Edwin Cameron, "Unapprehended Felons: Gays and Lesbians and the Law in South Africa," in *Defiant Desires*, ed. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (New York: Routledge, 1995), 89–98.
32. See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," *Social Text* 25–26 (1990): 56–

80; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2005), and Black Public Sphere Collective, *The Black Public Sphere* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995).

33. For discussion of migrant-worker hostels, see Glen Elder, *Hostels, Sexuality, and the Apartheid Legacy* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2003).

34. See Peter Galli and Luis Rafael, “Johannesburg Health Clubs’: Places of Erotic Langour or Prison-Houses of Desire?” in Gevisser and Cameron, *Defiant Desires*, 135.

35. Moten, *Black and Blur*, 246.

36. The one time he has a Black customer, the man is an African American who has stereotypical ideas about African men, fracturing any sense of transnational racial solidarity and reminding the reader of the limits of diasporic connection. For work on the limits of diasporic connection, see Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*.

37. Viljoen, introduction, 4.

38. Judith Butler offers a clarifying discussion on the possible limits of queerness as an analytic in “Critically Queer,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1 (1993): 17–32.

39. Jackie Kay, *The Adoption Papers* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: Bloodaxe, 1991).

40. Diane Middlebrook, *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

41. One chapter, “Music,” gives the reader the sense of occupying Joss’s psychic space, but the chapter advances the idea that when Joss plays his trumpet, his body fades away as do features such as sex and race.

42. Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1.3 (1994): 237–54, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-3-237>.

43. Goldsmith’s poem is called “The Body of Michael Brown.” For a consideration of the controversy surrounding Goldsmith’s public reading, see Alec Wilkinson, “Something Borrowed,” *New Yorker*, October 5, 2015, 26–33; or Jillian Steinhauer, “Kenneth Goldsmith Remixes Brown Autopsy as Poetry,” *Hyperallergic*, March 16, 2015, <https://hyperallergic.com>.

44. See Neil Davidson and Satnam Virdee, “Understanding Racism in Scotland,” in *No Problem Here: Understanding Racism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2018), 9–12.

45. C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2017), 151; emphasis added.

46. One might also hear resonances with Édouard Glissant’s discussion of the value of opacity in *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 189–94.

47. Millie does describe helping Joss change his bindings. It is one of the most intimate interactions between them that is mentioned.

Conclusion: Lives of Constraint, Paths to Freedom

1. See Avilez, “Uncertain Freedom.”

2. Phillip Brian Harper, “The Evidence of Felt Intuition: Minority Experience,

Everyday Life, and Critical Speculative Knowledge,” in *Black Queer Studies*, ed. Mae Henderson and E. Patrick Johnson (Durham: Duke UP, 2005), 117.

3. See Wahneema Lubiano, “Black Nationalism and Black Common Sense: Policing Ourselves and Others Sense,” in *The House That Race Built* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 232–52, as well as her work in general.

4. See Sarah Jane Cervenak, *Wandering: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014).

5. See Bryan Peterson, *Understanding Exposure* (New York: AmPhoto, 2016).

6. Zanele Muholi, “Faces and Phases,” in *Queer African Reader*, ed. Okari Ekine and Hakima Abbas (Dakar, Nairobi: Pambazuka, 2013), 169.

7. Nonkululeko Godana, “Is Anybody Comfortable?” in *Zanele Muholi: Only Half of the Picture*, ed. Sophie Perryer (Cape Town, South Africa: Stevenson, 2006), 91–92.

8. Gail Smith, “Outlaw Culture,” in *Zanele Muholi*, 90–91.

9. Okwui Enwezor, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life*, ed. Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester (New York: International Center of Photography, 2013), 33.

10. Michael Godby, “‘Native Studies’: Photographic Responses to the ‘Native Question’ in South Africa around the Middle of the Twentieth Century,” in *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 47.

11. Gabi Ngcobo, a curator at the Iziko South African National Gallery, has also used the language of “invitation” to characterize Muholi’s artistic projects. See her introduction to *Zanele Muholi*, 4.

12. Smith, “Outlaw Culture,” 90.

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“Black Queer Freedom is an outstanding work of literary and cultural criticism, and exemplary of the riches to be had in Black queer studies. It illuminates how space—be it the street, the prison, the hospital, or the place of labor—mediates our injury and our desire. The Black queer subject, what Avilez calls ‘the injury-bound subject,’ is shaped by spatial injury and vulnerability and also enlivened by desire. Avilez explores how Black queer artists articulate the erotic imperative of spatial justice, offering artistic address that exceeds legal redress available for Black queer people. Considering a wide array of genres—poetry, fiction, memoir, ethnography, oral history, and portraiture—and traversing a wide terrain—Canada, Jamaica, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States—Avilez shows the capaciousness of Black queer life and art and indeed guides us to reach higher ground where freedom is possible.”

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Whether engaged in same-sex desire or gender nonconformity, Black queer individuals live with being perceived as a threat while simultaneously being subjected to the threat of physical, psychological, and socioeconomic injury. Attending to and challenging threats has become a defining element in queer Black artists’ work throughout the Black diaspora. GerShun Avilez analyzes the work of diasporic artists who, denied government protections, have used art to create spaces for justice. He first focuses on how the state seeks to inhibit the movement of Black queer bodies through public spaces, whether on the street or across borders. From there, he pivots to institutional spaces—specifically prisons and hospitals—and the ways such places seek to expose queer bodies in order to control them. Throughout, he reveals how desire and art open routes to Black queer freedom when policy, the law, racism, and homophobia threaten physical safety, civil rights, and social mobility.

GERSHUN AVILEZ is an associate professor of English at the University of Maryland and the author of *Radical Aesthetics and Modern Black Nationalism*.

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